THIS VOLUME, devoted to the study of the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas, and the Dharma and other Śāstras, is of particular significance to modern India. One of the major problems facing the country today is the need to resuscitate and reinterpret those national ideals which, for the most part lying dormant, may even now be clearly discerned as the life-force which, through countless centuries, has maintained the continuity of India's culture.

THOSE IDEALS are treasured in the books dealt with in this volume. The two great epics, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Purāṇas, and the Dharma and other Śāstras all speak to us of the divine nature of man, and of the interdependence in one great spiritual unity of everything that exists. Here these great ideas come to us not, for the most part, in abstruse philosophical terms, but in simple language woven into narrative, or exemplified in characters portrayed in moving drama.

IT IS hoped that this volume will play some part in the realization of the present-day need to grasp afresh those ancient national ideals, that they may once more become the basis of India's social life and the foundation of national unity. As India takes her stand upon her own national ideals and her sense of nationality is thus established, those same ideals, because they are universal truths, will also become a guiding light to the whole world in its complex journey through the maze of modern civilization.

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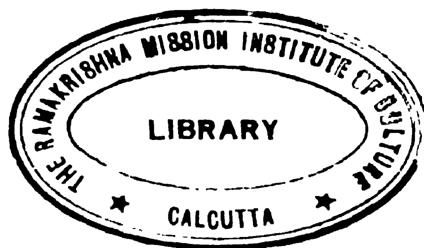
VOLUME II

ITIHĀSAS, PURĀṆAS, DHARMA AND OTHER ŚĀSTRAS

INTRODUCTION BY

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Formerly Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University





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PUBLISHER'S NOTE ON THE PAPERBACK EDITION

Since its inception in 1938, the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture has taken upon itself as its major responsibility the publishing of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, as this publication and the Institute are both committed to promoting the study, interpretation, and dissemination of India's cultural heritage. Originally this work was planned in four volumes, but later it was decided to publish it in eight volumes in order to adequately represent the various aspects of Indian thought and culture. The sixth volume, covering science and technology, was published in 1986, but for various reasons the remaining two volumes have not yet come out. We have now taken them up in earnest, and we expect to publish the seventh volume about a year from now.

In the mean time, popular demand for this valuable series as well as the promise of financial assistance from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, have prompted us to publish a paperback edition and distribute it at a low price so that more families can afford it.. We are grateful to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, New Delhi, for their assistance and to Swapna Printing Works for the fine job they have done in a short time.

This series, comprising the first six volumes, is but a reprint of the six-volume deluxe edition of *The Cultural Heritage of India*. We expect it will be well received by the reading public.

7 March 2001 | Publisher

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE Ramakrishna Mission established this Institute of Culture in 1938 in fulfilment of one of the projects to commemorate the Birth Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna (1936). At the same time the Institute was vested with the entire rights of *The Cultural Heritage of India*. This publication is thus one of the major responsibilities of the Institute; it also serves to fulfil a primary aim of the Institute, which is to promote the study, interpretation, and dissemination of the cultural heritage of India.

The first edition of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, in three volumes and about 2,000 pages, the work of one hundred distinguished Indian scholars, was published in 1937 by the Sri Ramakrishna Birth Centenary Publication Committee as a Birth Centenary memorial. This work presented for the first time a panorama of the cultural history of India, and it was immediately acclaimed as a remarkable contribution to the cultural literature of the world. This edition was sold out within a few years, and the work had long been out of print. When considering the question of a second edition, it was felt that, instead of reprinting the work in its original form, advantage should be taken of the opportunity to enlarge the scope of the work, making it more comprehensive, more authoritative and adequately representative of different aspects of Indian thought, and, at the same time, thoroughly to revise the old articles to bring them up to date.

According to the new scheme drawn up on this basis, the number of volumes has been increased. The plan of arrangement has been improved by grouping the topics in such a way that each volume may be fairly complete in itself and fulfil the requirements of those interested in any particular branch of learning. Each volume is self-contained, with separate pagination, bibliography, and index, and is introduced by an outstanding authority. Since due regard has been paid to historicity and critical treatment, it is hoped that this work will provide a useful guide to the study of the complex pattern of India's cultural history.

The band of distinguished scholars who have co-operated so ably in this task have done their work as a labour of love, in a spirit of service to scholarship and world understanding. Equally essential to the success of the undertaking was the assistance of the Government of India who made a generous grant towards the cost of publication. Without this dual co-operation, it would have been impossible to set out on a venture of this

magnitude ; and to the contributors as well as to the Government of India the Institute therefore expresses its deepest gratitude.

This second volume of the second edition of *The Cultural Heritage of India* follows the publication of Volume I in 1958. It is perhaps necessary to explain how it happened that these two volumes were preceded by Volume III, in 1953, and by Volume IV, in 1956. In the first edition of this work there was a fairly large number of articles on philosophy and religion, the two subjects which, under the new scheme, had been assigned to Volumes III and IV. Thus these two volumes acquired an advantage over the others which required a much greater proportion of fresh material, and it was therefore thought expedient to publish them first. The other volumes, which required much more fresh material, thus gained extra time.

Volume II contains forty-three articles, of which all but seven are new. These seven articles from the first edition have been suitably revised and, where necessary, renamed. This volume has had the editorial care of Dr. S. K. De, Dr. U. N. Ghoshal, Dr. R. C. Hazra, and, in particular, Dr. A. D. Pusalker, all members of the Board of Editors of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, of which the Chairman is Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the President of the Institute. The Institute expresses its indebtedness to the editors of Volume II for the unstinted labour they have put into their task. The Institute's thanks are also due to Sri B. S. Kesavan, Librarian of the National Library, Calcutta, for having provided an excellent subject-wise bibliography, which has greatly added to the utility of the volume. The Institute is also grateful to those who have rendered help in the preparation of this volume. Dr. S. N. Ray worked on the proof and also in collaboration with Professor V. A. Thiagarajan helped prepare the index. Mr. David McCutchion, Lecturer in Comparative Literature at the University of Jadavpur, very kindly went through many of the articles from the point of view of language.

To Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the well-known scholar and former Dewan of Travancore, former Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University, and now be Chairman of the Hindu Religious Endowments Enquiry Commission, special thanks are due for his Introduction to this volume.

As regards the title of this work, it has to be remembered that the subcontinent of India has been one cultural unit throughout the ages, cutting across political boundaries. For the purpose of the articles in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, which attempts to give an account of the cultaral heritage of Indra from the most ancient times to the present day, India therefore means the subcontinent of India irrespective of political divisions, and this use has in no way an, political implication.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This volume, devoted to the study of the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas, and the Dharma and other Śāstras, is of particular significance to modern India. One of the major problems facing the country today is the need to resuscitate and reinterpret those national ideals which, for the most part lying dormant, may yet still be clearly discerned as the life-force which, through countless centuries, has maintained the continuity of India's culture. Those ideals are treasured in the books dealt with in this volume, in simple language woven into narrative and dramatic episode, and exemplified in characters portrayed. It is hoped that this volume will play some part in the realization of the present-day need to grasp afresh those ancient national ideals that they may once more become the basis of national life and a bond of national unity, and that they may also be a guiding light not only to India, but to the whole world in its complex journey through the maze of modern civilization.

March 1962

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a	stands for	अ	and sounds like	*o*	in	c*o*me
ā	„ „	आ	„ „ „	*a*	„	f*a*r
i	„ „	इ	„ „ „	*i*	„	b*i*t
ī	„ „	ई	„ „ „	*ee*	„	f*ee*l
u	„ „	उ	„ „ „	*u*	„	f*u*ll
ū	„ „	ऊ	„ „ „	*oo*	„	c*oo*l
ṛ	„ „	ऋ	„ may be pronounced like	*ri*	in	*ri*ng
e	„ „	ए	„ sounds like	*a*	in	c*a*ke
ai	„ „	ऐ	„ „ „	*i*	„	m*i*te
o	„ „	ओ	„ „ „	*o*	„	n*o*te
au	„ „	औ	„ „ „	*ou*	„	c*ou*nt
ṁ	„ „	ं	(*anusvāra*) and sounds like	*m*	in	so*m*e
ḥ	„ „	:	(*visarga*) „ „	„		soft, short *h*

' (apostrophe) stands for s (elided अ).

ṅ stands for ङ्, ñ for ञ्, and ṇ for ण; the first is to be pronounced like English *ng* in si*ng*, or *n* in ba*n*k; the second like the *n* in English si*n*ge (a palatal n); and the third, the cerebral ṇ, is made with the tongue-tip up-turned and touching the dome of the palate.

c	stands for	च्	and sounds like	*ch*	in	chur*ch*
ch	„ „	छ्	„ „ „	*chh*	„	chur*ch*-*h*ill
ṭ	„ „	ट्	„ „ „	*t*	„	cur*t*
ṭh	„ „	ठ्	„ „ „	*th*	„	por*t*-*h*ole
ḍ	„ „	ड्	„ „ „	*d*	„	bir*d*
ḍh	„ „	ढ्	„ „ „	*dh*	„	bir*d*-*h*ouse
t	„ „	त्	„ „ „	*t*	„	pa*t* (Italian *t*)
th	„ „	थ्	„ „ „	*th*	„	hi*t*-*h*ard
d	„ „	द्	„ „ „	*d*	„	ha*d* (Italian *d*)
dh	„ „	ध्	„ „ „	*dh*	„	ma*d*-*h*ouse
v	„ „	व्	„ „ „	*v* or *w*	„	le*v*y, *w*ater
ś	„ „	श्	„ „ „	*sh*	„	*sh*ip
ṣ	„ „	ष्	„ „ „	*sh*	„	*sh*ould
ḷ	„ „	ळ	„ „ „	the cerebral *l*, made with the tongue-tip up-turned and touching the dome of the palate.		

The following points should also be noted:

(1) All Sanskrit words, except when they are proper nouns, or have come into common use in English, or represent a class of literature, cult, sect, or school of thought, are italicized.

(2) Excepting in the case of words like '*karma*', the bases of Sanskrit nouns are used as *sannyāsin*, *svāmin*, etc.

(3) Anglicized Sanskrit words like 'kārmic', 'sāṁsāric', 'Arhathood', etc. are Romanized.

(4) Current geographical names, except in cases where their Sanskrit forms are given, or in special cases where the context requires it, and all modern names from the commencement of the nineteenth century are given in their usual spelling and without diacritical marks.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI.	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
Agni.	*Agni Purāṇa*
Ait. Br.	*Aaitareya Brāhmaṇa*
Āp. Dh. S.	*Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*
ĀSS.	*Ānandasrama Sanskrit Series*
Āśv. Dh. S.	*Āśvalāyana Dharma-Sūtra*
A. V.	*Atharva-Veda*
Baudh. Dh. S.	*Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*
Bd.	*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*
BEFEO.	*Bulletin de L'ecole Francaise d'extreme Orient*
B. G.	*Bhagavad-Gītā*
Bhā. (*Bhāg.*)	*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
Bhav.	*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*
Br.	*Brāhmaṇa*
Brahma.	*Brahma Purāṇa*
Brhv.	*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*
Bṛ. Sm.	*Bṛhaspati Smṛti*
Bṛ. U.	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
BSS.	*Bombay Sanskrit Series*
Chā. U.	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
CHI.	*Cultural Heritage of India*
Dh. S.	*Dharma-Sūtra*
EI.	*Epigraphia Indica*
Gar.	*Garuḍa Purāṇa*
Gaut. Dh. S.	*Gautama Dharma-śāstra*
Gṛ. S.	*Gṛhya-Sūtra*
HCIP.	*History and Culture of the Indian People*
H. Dh.	*History of Dharma-śāstra, by P. V. Kane*
HIL.	*History of Indian Literature*
HOS.	*Harvard Oriental Series*
HSL.	*History of Sanskrit Literature*
Hv.	*Harivaṁśa*
IA.	*Indian Antiquary*
Ī. U.	*Īśa Upaniṣad*
Jāt.	*Jātaka*
JUB.	*Journal of the University of Bombay*
Ka. U.	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
Kām.	*Kāmandakīya Nītisāra*
Kauṭ.	*Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*

Kāt.	*Kātyāyana Smṛti*
Ke. U.	*Kena Upaniṣad*
Kūr.	*Kūrma Purāṇa*
Liṅga.	*Liṅga Purāṇa*
Manu.	*Manu Smṛti*
Mārk.	*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*
Mat.	*Matsya Purāṇa*
Ma. U.	*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*
Mbh.	*Mahābhārata*
Mbh. (Cr. Ed.)	*Mahābhārata (Critical Edition)*
Mu. U.	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
Nār.	*Nāradīya Purāṇa*
Nār. Sm.	*Nārada Smṛti*
NIA.	*New Indian Antiquary*
P.	*Purāṇa*
Pad.	*Padma Purāṇa*
Pān.	*Pāṇini*
Par.	*Parāśara*
Rāj.	*Rājataraṅginī*
Rām.	*Rāmāyaṇa*
Ṛ. V.	*Ṛg-Veda*
Śat. Br.	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
SBE.	*Sacred Books of the East*
Sk.	*Skanda Purāṇa*
Sm.	*Smṛti*
Sm. C.	*Smṛti-candrikā*
Śr. S.	*Śrauta-Sūtra*
Śukra.	*Śukra Nītisāra*
S. V.	*Sāma-Veda*
Taitt. Br.	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*
Tai. U.	*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*
Vāj. S.	*Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*
Vām.	*Vāmana Purāṇa*
Var.	*Varāha Purāṇa*
Vas.	*Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra*
Vāyu.	*Vāyu Purāṇa*
Viṣṇu. Dh. S.	*Viṣṇu Dharma-Sūtra*
Viṣṇu.	*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*
Yāj.	*Yājñavalkya Smṛti*
Y. V.	*Yajur-Veda*

INTRODUCTION

THE *Cultural Heritage of India*, sponsored by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, is at once a symbol of the renaissance of Hindu thought and ideals and a treasure-house of ancient lore. The whole range of Indian civilization and the variegated products of Hindu culture have been reviewed in its several volumes dealing with the religions, philosophies, literature, and the arts and sciences of India from the twilight past to the present day.

The admitted achievements of India in the directions of assimilation, adaptation, and synthesis of diverse, and even conflicting, points of view, will be illustrated by the movements recorded in these volumes. The religious, artistic, and philosophical developments in India demonstrate India's consistent striving towards *samavāya*, that is, reconciliation and concord. Cultural patterns have, of course, been modified from time to time, but different environments, diversified racial contributions, and innumerable local and historical traditions have not basically affected the continuity of Indian culture during six thousand years or more.

Volume II of this literary *tour-de-force* comprises studies in the Itihāsas, Purāṇas, Dharma and other Śāstras. This volume will be specially significant in the light of present-day Indian conditions and would be invaluable for a proper solution of the problem of national integration which is now exercising the minds of Indian leaders. The conviction of the immanence of the Supreme Being in every animate entity, leading to a realization of the dignity of each individual is the message taught by this volume and should be of crucial importance for creating those bonds of love and service which are indispensable for today and tomorrow. From another point of view, the contributions contained in this volume would be of import as they would put in proper perspective the values emphasized in modern civilization. India, while not disparaging economic advancement or social utility, has always stressed the importance of human personality against all challenges to it. Neither stark individualism nor collectivization can solve the problems confronting humanity today, and this lesson is specially conveyed by the Itihāsas and the Purānas.

The *Amarakoṣa*, describing the main characteristics of the Purāṇas, specially points out that the commands of the Vedas are like those of a master (*Prabhu Saṁhitā*) whereas the teachings of the Itihāsas and Purāṇas may be compared with the advice and counsel of friends (*Suhṛt Saṁhitā*).

The Epic Age during which the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* received their final shape was a period of racial and ideological conflict;

and, historically speaking, this period produced the two great Epics as well as the *Manu Dharma-śāstra*, the Codes of Yājñavalkya, Nārada, and Parāśara and the earlier Purāṇas. Great mental expansions and new political outlooks were the characteristics of this age. Gradually, the idea was evolved that India, in spite of its various kingdoms, races, and creeds, was essentially one. This fundamental unity is enforced in several passages of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Kūrma Purāṇa*, in describing Bhāratavarṣa, emphasizes its unity notwithstanding the diversities of race and culture; and the earlier *Vāyu Purāṇa* strikes the same note. The Hindu scheme of life expressed in the formula, *dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa* which had originated earlier was, during this period, perfected and codified. Ideal types of character representing all stages of human life became epic heroes. Not only the ideal *sannyāsin* or the *ṛṣi* but the ideal king, the loyal wife and brother, the disciplined and diligent student, the citizen active in his vocation and the peasant as the guardian of fundamental virtues and loyalties were presented in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas as examples and symbols of the variegated Indian life. The influence cannot be exaggerated of such examples of human potentiality and achievement as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Kauśalyā, Sītā, Hanūmat, Bharata, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma. The formula afore-mentioned of *dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa*, became more than formal when it was illustrated by the lives of the countless characters described in the Purāṇas and the Itihāsas. The stories, epilogues, and parables contained in them were not put together for the purpose of furnishing a chronologically accurate history. Recent researches have demonstrated that the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas are more accurate historically, geographically, and chronologically than was at one time supposed; but it can never be forgotten that they were composed rather to furnish examples and models than to record specific historical incidents in dry detail. Moreover, while each Purāṇa exalts a particular deity, it must be noted that the catholicity and the uniformity of the Hindu approach to the Supreme are affirmed at every turn. For instance, Rāma is described as a devotee of Śiva and Āditya; and so was Arjuna. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*, in fact, asserts that he who affirms superiority or inferiority among the divine manifestations is a sinner.

From the time of Macaulay, it has been a favourite pursuit of some critics to deride the geography and description of the Purāṇas and to accuse them of exaggeration or distortion. Some special virtures are, in their opinion, grossly over-accentuated as in the cases of Śivicakravartin, Hariścandra and Karṇa. In many ancient scriptures, including the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and the Old and the New Testaments, there are to be found similar inherent improbabilities and historical contradictions. But

it must not be overlooked that these great products of the human mind were not intended to be substitutes for historical handbooks or for Directories like those of Baedeker or Murray.

A proper interpretation of the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas would be to regard them as the works of gifted seers who availed themselves of certain ancient or recent historical and religious traditions, and wove those traditions into narratives, anecdotes, episodes, and homilies, these works reflecting and reproducing certain attitudes towards life. In truth, these are a body of writings which are popular expositions of inherited truths and messages, their avowed purpose being to diffuse their purport amongst the people at large. Thus, the *Rāmāyaṇa* furnishes pictures of kings who led a spiritual life and of ascetics who played a great part in the affairs of nations. Difficult situations are pictured whose impact on several human souls is marvellously analysed. *Dharma,* as the chief factor in the shaping of human life is the underlying motive of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its many episodes. The *Mahābhārata* is not only a picture of a great internecine struggle illustrating the conflict of human motives and human attributes but a repertory of comprehensive secular and religious learning. It is not simply a great poem but also a manual of ethics and politics. It can well be asserted that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* have throughout been the foundations of Hindu ethics and beliefs.

Whatever the respective dates of the several Purāṇas may be, they embody ancient legends as the very name Purāṇa signifies. Whereas the Epics deal with the actions of heroes as mortal men and embody and illustrate both human virtues and frailties, the Purāṇas mainly celebrate the power and the work of various super-human personages and deities. The *pañcalakṣmaṇas* described by Amara Siṁha as characterizing the Purāṇas are not found in all of them. The contents of many Purāṇas are very old but many of the later ones have a definite sectarian bias. They are nevertheless a valuable record of the various Hindu beliefs which originated next in order to the Vedas and incorporated hero-worship as well as divine-worship, and they may be rightly described as essentially pantheistic in character. Although a particular divinity may be glorified, nevertheless, there is an underlying quest for unity of life and of Godhead.

Almost all the Purāṇas are in the form of dialogues between an exponent and an enquirer. Thus, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* was a gift to Pulastya by Brahmā. Pulastya communicated it to Parāśara and Parāśara to Maitreya. The Purāṇas are divided into three categories, the *sāttvic* Purāṇas, the *tāmasic* Purāṇas, and the *rājasic* Purāṇas. The *Vayu Purāṇa* is the oldest of them. But perhaps the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are the most celebrated, and the latter ranks in popular estimation as almost

equal in value to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, especially as it deals at length with the Kṛṣṇa incarnation and all the activities of that Supreme *avatāra*. From the literary point of view, perhaps, the most perfect is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

These Purāṇas and the several Upapurāṇas of which eighteen are generally named, when rightly construed, are neither mutually contradictory nor even purely sectarian. Regarded as a whole, they furnish a compendious portrayal of human rights and obligations and an expressive description of Hindu life as it has been, and ought to be, lived. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, for instance, is a mirror of the highest ideals of Hindu culture and civilization. In his lectures on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Right Honourable Srinivasa Sastri declared that it furnishes impressive illustrations of cause being followed inevitably by effect, of *karma*, re-birth and destiny, and that it embodies generalizations of experience in private and public affairs enshrined in proverbs, maxims and rules of chivalry and state-craft. The *Mahābhārata*, as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has indicated, contains an illuminating account of the Indian genius both in its nobility and greatness and its tragic weakness and insufficiency. The *Mahābhārata* speaks of men and women who are animated by strong passions—both good and evil—but the purpose of this Epic is to show the futility of the betrayal of ideals and of the pursuit of shams and of evil. It stresses that an underlying purpose and a guiding destiny are inseparable from human history. The appeal of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is to the *bhakta*. Devotion and detachment in several forms are embodied in attractive stories. The Sage Vyāsa, having edited the Vedas and composed the *Mahābhārata*, had nevertheless not attained serenity, and the *Bhāgavata* was, as it states, composed on the advice of Nārada who told Vyāsa that he could attain peace of mind only by the contemplation as a true devotee of the Deity and his incarnations. The *Bhāgavata*, at the same time, recognizes the principle of relativity, and its spiritual prescriptions are adjusted to the different stages of individual development. The psychology of *bhakti* has been inimitably studied and expounded in this most popular of the Purāṇas.

The Itihāsas and the Purāṇas are specially remarkable for the number of episodes contained in them. The most remarkable, of course, are the various Gītās, the most renowned of them being the *Bhagavad-Gītā* itself. It was the revelation granted to Arjuna by Śrī Kṛṣṇa at a critical period not only for the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas but for India as a whole. It has been variously described as embodying pure monism or qualified monism with the introduction of Prakṛti. It has been described as the Sāṁkhya-yoga, and many commentators have made the *Gītā* the basis for their several and divergent interpretations. Rightly viewed, however, the *Gītā* is not a

weapon for dialectical warfare. In the language of Sri Aurobindo, it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience, and the view it gives us embraces all provinces of the human mind and soul. It maps out but does not cut up or build walls. The *Gītā* came into existence after the period of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. It starts with a freshly conceived synthesis and constructs a harmony of knowledge, love, and work (*jñāna, bhakti,* and *karma*), through which the soul of man can directly approach the Eternal. It truly seizes on the real obstacles to spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest. The body and mind are to be utilized for the opening up of the divine life. In fine, the *Gītā* may be described as a gospel of the divine perfectibility of man.

It may be remembered that, in addition to the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* there are interposed in our sacred literature other works entitled Gītās, notably the *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā,* being a dialogue between Janaka and Aṣṭāvakra; the *Avadhūta-Gītā,* being a conversation between Dattātreya and Skanda; the *Anu-Gītā,* found in the *Aśvamedhaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*; and the *Uddhava-Gītā* embodied in the *Bhāgavata* and containing the last message and instructions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to his devotee, Uddhava. The basic message of all the Gītās is thus enunciated in the *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā*: You namely, the immanent self, do not belong to the Brāhmaṇa or any other caste, nor to any *āśrama.* You are beyond visual perception and detached—(i.e. beyond attachment) and beyond forms. Witnessing all phenomena, you are happy (i.e. you preserve your equilibrium).

It is in the *Uddhava-Gītā* that Sri Krishna says: In the beginning men had but one caste known as Haṁsa. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* the Lord proclaims: The four castes were created by me to function according to individual qualities and inheritance. The conclusion is thus stated: He who does his duty in consonance with his innate potentiality incurs no sin. The main requisites are again and again declared to be detachment and faith in the ultimate.

The Dharma-śāstras and the Artha-śāstras and the legal treatises implementing their practical application by means of a hierarchical judicial system comprise normative sciences devoted to the practical methods by which life should be regulated, persons should be educated and trained, trade, commerce, and economic progress stimulated, and the right ends of human life secured. The *Manu Smṛti* is the leading Dharma-śāstra and Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* and Kāmandaka's *Nīti-śāstra* are celebrated manuals on polity. The *Mitākṣarā,* the *Dāyabhāga* and other legal treatises purport to be based on the Dharma-śāstras; and until recent legislation changed the law in some respects, these governed human and family relationships amongst

Hindus through the centuries. They expounded rules that outlined rights and obligations which were enforced by means of specific sanctions. The King or Ruler for the time being was the final appellate authority but he was bound by the dictates of *dharma* and was obliged to recognize usage and custom founded on the practice of good men in the various parts of the country. Such customs were recognized as valid even though they might be local or regional. The King or *Rājā* was described as the fashioner of the times.

This may have meant, in essence, that the law was not static but could move with the times. The *Manu Dharma-śāstra* contains the teachings of Manu or the primeval man expounded by his pupil Bhṛgu. It purports to set out the rules of living of all sects and communities. Many verses of the *Manu Smṛti* occur in the *Mahābhārata*. There were other Dharma-śāstras also compiled by Nārada, Yājñavalkya, Gautama, Baudhāyana, Āpastamba and others. It is not possible, here and now, fully to discuss the contents or purports of these Dharma-śāstras but they belong to a period when, after the Epic Age, India had settled down into social and economic strata. Efforts were made by sages and seers to formulate the rules of life to be followed at each stage of human existence and by the various social and economic groups. The Dharma-śāstras treat social life from the point of view of religion and morality; on the other hand, the Artha-śāstras (of which Kauṭilya's is the most well-knit and logical) take account of all previous literature on the subject and study contemporary states and their politics and social nexus. In the words of Kauṭilya himself, *artha* is the object of men, and this Śāstra aids in the acquisition and protection of property and the governance of each country. Kauṭilya himself mentions schools of polity including those of Jaimini, Bādarāyaṇa and others. His *Arthaśāstra* is undoubtedly based on the logic of the material interests of kings and monarchs and the means of securing them; and it may be worth while to note that later literary tradition has often assailed Kauṭilya's utilitarian point of view. Kauṭilya recognizes the presence of small States and discusses their inter-relations. But basically his outlook is in favour of an expanded empire and he is remarkable in having envisaged the Cakravarti Kṣetra as the whole country stretching from the Himalayas to the Southern ocean. As is well-known, Viṣṇu Gupta, or Kauṭilya, otherwise known as Cāṇakya, was not only celebrated as a king-maker but is now regarded as the greatest exponent of realistic policies of governance and of methods of diplomacy as applicable to a period of foreign impact and internal dis-unity.

In general perspective, the *Rāmāyaṇa* may be regarded as describing the penetration of Aryan culture into the whole of India. The *Mahābhārata* not only reflects the culture of a particular age but symbolizes

various forms of struggle between the forces of good and evil. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is a great work of synthesis and the *Bhāgavata* itself is marked by a great spirit of accommodation.

The *Manu Dharma-śāstra* furnishes detailed instructions regarding social rules and practices. Manu's system is based on a deliberate emphasis on the need and importance of the conservation of social order. It summarized, and insisted upon, custom and convention at a time when they were assailed. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* and the other Śāstras prove that both the practical and theoretical problems of economics and politics were closely studied by our ancients. The Dharma-śāstras and Nīti-śāstras contain lessons invaluable to us relating to the nature and limits of sovereignty, the basis of local government, and records of representative institutions, theories of punishment, the functions of the police and the principles of taxation. A great deal of realism can be perceived in these works side by side with the idealism underlying most Hindu literary and religious efforts.

In the Hindu view of life, ideals and activities were considered to be inter-dependent. Society was viewed as indivisible, and on the reconciliation and equipose of duties and obligations, whether of individuals, classes or functionaries, the harmony not only of a particular State or community but of the whole creation was held to depend. Life, to quote Professor K. V. Rangaswami Aiyanger in his *Rāja Dharma*, was a continuum not interrupted by death ; and so were deed and thought.

In dealing with the Dharma-śāstras, it must be remembered that a great deal of misunderstanding has arisen from the mistranslation of Manu's term, *varṇa*. It has always been translated as caste whereas it should be, as rightly pointed out by Vincent Smith, rendered as class or order. The *Manu Dharma-śāstra* realizes the distinction between *varṇa* and *jāti* (class and birth)—a distinction accentuated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which speaks of *varṇas* as dependent as much on mental equipment as on heritage. The fluidity of the institution of caste and its intrinsic self-regulation have not been rightly appreciated in most studies of Indian institutions.

Finally it is essential to note that, along with the development in North India of literature, ethics, and polity, there was a parallel evolution in the Draviḍa region described and commented upon by poets and hymnologists. It resulted in notable works like the *Kural* and the literary output of the Saṅgam period and the later didactic, poetic, and gnomic as well as devotional literature. These composed in the Southern tongues manifest the influence of Aryan culture side by side with the growth of a characteristic and original outlook on life, polity, domestic and political institutions. A recognition of the high position of women, the rapid developments of specific social traditions, and the emergence of new values in several spheres

of life which are now discernible are the results of the same genius for assimilation of differing indigenous and even foreign elements, and the same intellectual courage and enterprise that have marked the spread of Indian thought-processes through the millennia. These, it will be realized, find some of their most noteworthy manifestations in the religious and secular writings in this volume by acknowledged experts.

PART I

THE TWO GREAT EPICS

1

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT AS A VEHICLE OF INDIAN CULTURE

ORIGIN OF CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

'FROM the language of the *Ṛgveda*', as Keith observes, 'we can trace a steady development to Classical Sanskrit, through the later Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas'.[1] Classical Sanskrit appears already in the Upaniṣads, especially in the *Kaṭha, Kena, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya,* and *Śvetāśvatara,* although archaic forms and expressions are quite frequent. The Sūtra literature carries the development of classical Sanskrit still further. Texts like the *Āśvalāyana Śrauta-Sūtra,* the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra,* the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta-Sūtra,* the *Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra,* the *Gobhila Gṛhya-Sūtra,* the *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra,* the *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra,* and the *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra,* are composed in classical Sanskrit prose; but apart from the *mantras* quoted in profusion, archaic forms and expressions are frequently employed: for example, *saptadaśāni, nipṛta, praskandayitvā, darpati, lunoti, parāṅ-āvṛtta, kulaṁkula, yoyupyate,* etc. Words like *syāmūla* (blanket), *sūda* (moist earth), *kusindha* (a headless corpse), *kulmi* (the end of a cow's tail), *vigulpha* (increased, augmented), etc., found in the Sūtra texts, are rarely used in later Sanskrit literature. The *Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra,*[2] for example, uses *dāti* in the sense of 'cutting', but the use is rare in classical Sanskrit. Yāska, indeed, says that the use of the verb is confined to the Easterners, while the derivative *dātra* is used by the Northerners.[3]

Broadly speaking, the Sūtra literature represents a phase of classical Sanskrit anterior to Pāṇini or, in any case, the time when the norm of Pāṇini became finally established. Two other works, the *Nirukta* of Yāska and the *Bṛhaddevatā,* which properly belong to Vedic literature, represent this phase of early classical Sanskrit. The *Nirukta,* in fact, records the first systematic attempt to interpret the verses of the *Ṛg-Veda* in classical Sanskrit.

BRANCHES OF STUDY IN LATER VEDIC PERIOD

An idea of the various forms of literature and branches of knowledge which came into being towards the end of the later Vedic period can be had from certain references to them in the Upaniṣads and the Sūtra texts. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[4] mentions, in addition to the four Vedas, *itihāsa, purāṇa, vidyās* (arts), *upaniṣads, ślokas* (verses), *sūtras* (aphorisms),

[1] *HSL.*, p. 4. [2] I. 2. 8. 18. [3] *Nirukta*, II. 2.
[4] II. 4. 10. The terms *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* italicized in this citation and in the following

anuvyākhyānas (glosses), and *vyākhyānas* (explanations). The two latter forms of composition seem to have developed into *bhāṣya*, or regular commentary, at an early date, as the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*[5] mentions *sūtra* and *bhāṣya* together. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[6] mentions as subjects of study, in addition to the four Vedas and *itihāsa-purāṇa*, grammar, mathematics (*rāśi*), augury (*daiva*), the art of locating underground treasure (*nidhi*), dialectics (*vākovākya*), polity (*ekāyana*), the science of the gods (*deva-vidyā*), theosophy (*brahma-vidyā*), demonology (*bhuta-vidyā*), the art of government or warfare (*kṣatra-vidyā*), astronomy (*nakṣatra-vidyā*), serpent lore and the fine arts (*sarpa-devajana-vidyā*). The emergence of the new branches of study and the importance assigned to them can be seen in the *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra*,[7] which declares the learned Brāhmaṇa and the king to be responsible for the maintenance and regulation of the social order, and mentions the subjects in which they should be proficient. We are told that the king should be trained either in the three Vedas or in *ānvīkṣikī*,[8] which is variously explained as *nyāya-vidyā* or *ātma-vidyā*, and which apparently refers to philosophical training. Gautama then lays down that the king should carry out his functions in conformity with the tenets of the Vedas, the Dharma-śāstras, the Vedāṅgas, the Upavedas, and the *purāṇa*.[9] The Vedāṅgas are *śikṣā* (phonetics), *kalpa* (the ritual Sūtras or manuals), grammar, metrics, astronomy, and *nirukta* (etymology, or rather, the interpretation of the Veda).[10] According to the *Caraṇavyūha-pariśiṣta-Sūtra* attributed to Śaunaka, the Upavedas are the Āyur-Veda, the Gāndharva-Veda, the Dhanur-Veda, and the Artha-śāstra. The learned, or *bahuśruta* Brāhmaṇa, according to Gautama,[11] should be conversant with dialectics (*vākovākya*), *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*, in addition to the Vedas, the Vedāṅgas, and what is termed *loka*. This appears to be a new branch of study, and is explained as 'customary law or usage', the knowledge of which was necessary for the administration of justice and the regulation of social matters. The Dharma-Sūtras, in fact, bear testimony to the widening of the cultural horizon and a wider conception of social responsibilities, as it is evident from the attention paid in them to the administration of justice, crime and punishment, the regulation of trade, the law of inheritance, and allied topics.

Much of the Sūtra literature must have been prevalent before the time of Pāṇini, who is generally assigned to the fourth century B.C. Pāṇini, as we shall see, refers to certain Sūtra texts; and it is evident from his rule

pages stand for compositions lost, or submerged in extant works in an altered form. When they stand for the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Purāṇas now available, they are printed in roman with initial capital.—ed.

[5] III. 4. 4. [6] VII. 1 2. [7] VIII. 1 ff. [8] XI. 3. [9] XI. 21.

[10] About Vedāṅgas, see *C.H.I.*, Vol. I, chs. XV and XVI. [11] VIII. 4-6.

purāṇaproktesu brāhmaṇa-kalpeṣu that in his time certain Brāhmaṇas and Kalpa-Sūtras were regarded as very ancient. Among the texts not regarded as 'ancient' in his time, the *Kāśikā* mentions the Kalpa of Aśmaratha, who as Āśmarathya is already quoted in the *Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra* and the *Āśvalāyana Śrauta-Sūtra*. An extensive Sūtra literature seems to have existed in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., if not earlier; but much of it, probably the greater portion, appears to have perished, as we know practically nothing of the works of the teachers quoted in the extant Sūtras. The Śrauta-Sūtras quote, for instance, Āśmarathya, Ālekhana, Gāṇagāri, Taulvali, Kautsa, Gautama, and others; the *Gobhila Gṛhya-Sūtra* cites Mānatantavya; and the Dharma-Sūtras quote Kaṇva, Kuṇika, Kautsa, Hārīta, Vārṣyāyaṇi, Puṣkarasādi, Aupajaṅghani, Kaśyapa, and others. Many other teachers are likewise quoted in the *Nirukta* and the *Bṛhaddevatā*. Pāṇini[12] mentions the *Bhikṣu-Sūtras* of Pārāśarya and Karmanda. It is also noteworthy that the Dharma-Sūtras of Baudhāyana and Āpastamba quote a number of verses, introduced by the expression *udāharanti* (they cite as illustration), from unnamed sources, which points to the existence of a traditional literature on Dharma-śāstra and mythological topics. A verse of this category recording an opinion of Svāyambhuva Manu is quoted also in Yāska's *Nirukta*[13] while discussing the right of a daughter to the father's property.

The study of grammar was well developed before the time of Yāska who is quoted in the *Bṛhaddevatā* and was much earlier than Pāṇini. Yāska refers in the *Nirukta* to the views of the grammarians (*vaiyākaraṇāḥ*) and authorities like Śākaṭāyana and Gārgya on grammatical topics.[14] Pāṇini refers to the views of earlier grammarians like Āpiśali,[15] Sphoṭāyana,[16] Śākalya,[17] Bhāradvāja,[18] Gārgya,[19] Kāśyapa,[20] and Śākaṭāyana.[21] The works of these ancient grammarians have not come down to us, and we know very little about them beyond what is intimated by Pāṇini.

EARLY PHASE OF CLASSICAL SANSKRIT PRIOR TO THE CHRISTIAN ERA

An extensive literature appears to have grown up in early classical Sanskrit before and after the time of Pāṇini. The Vedic language became a thing of the past, more and more difficult to understand, and was superseded by classical Sanskrit as the vehicle of an ever-widening culture and new and varied forms of literature and thought. We shall here confine ourselves to a few indications about the new literature in its early phase prior to the Christian era.

[12] IV. 3. 110-111.
[13] III. 4.
[14] I. 12; IX. 5; XIII 9; etc.
[15] VI. 1. 92.
[16] VI. 1. 123.
[17] VIII. 3. 19.
[18] VII. 2. 63.
[19] VIII. 3. 20
[20] I. 2. 25.
[21] VIII. 3. 18.

Itihāsa and *purāṇa* occupy a prominent place among the literary forms that arose in the later Vedic and the early classical period. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,[22] after mentioning the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, and the *Sāma-Veda*, speaks of the *Atharva-Veda* as the fourth Veda and *itihāsa-purāṇa* as the fifth among the works studied by Nārada. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*[23] includes *itihāsa-purāṇa* in the study of sacred lore (*svādhyāya*) along with the four Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Kalpa-Sūtras, etc. *Itihāsa* and *purāṇa* are also separately mentioned, which shows that they formed two varieties of an allied class of composition. The *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*[24] quotes certain verses from a *purāṇa*; and in I.10.29.7 it gives a prose extract from the same source. A brief quotation from a *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa* occurs in *Āpastamba*, II.9.24.6. The citations in *Āpastamba* deal with Dharma-śāstra topics, but the *purāṇas* must have included also myths and legends, to judge from later examples. *Itihāsa* and *purāṇa* texts were occasionally recited in later Vedic ritual. A notable example of this is found in connection with the horse sacrifice, in the *pāriplava* recitations which took place on ten successive days, and were repeated in the same order throughout the year in the course of which the sacred horse was allowed to roam at large. On the eighth day, a *purāṇa* text was recited before an audience of *Puñjiṣṭhas*[25] explained as fishermen; and on the ninth day, too, an *itihāsa* text was recited before a gathering of *brahmacārins*, or students of the Veda. Similarly, in the *Śānti-karma*, or the propitiatory rite, prescribed in *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*,[26] the participants kindle and attend upon the sacred fire far into the night, reciting auspicious *itihāsas* and *purāṇas*. A similar reference to *itihāsa* occurs in *Gobhila Gṛhya-Sūtra*.[27]

Itihāsa was originally a legend connected with a Vedic hymn. Yāska's *Nirukta* recounts a few of them, and gives, in fact, the earliest extant prose version of *itihāsa* legends in classical Sanskrit. We may refer, for instance, to the well-known story of the brothers Devāpi and Śaṁtanu.[28]

Yāska refers also to the views of the *aitihāsikas*, that is, those who were familiar with the traditional legends, and who may be regarded as the exponents of the *itihāsa* literature of which so little has survived. The *nairuktas*, for instance, interpreted Vṛtra as a rain cloud; while, according to the *aitihāsikas*, he was a demon.[29] They also regarded the Aśvins as two kings who had done pious deeds.[30]

References to *itihāsa* occur in the *Bṛhaddevatā*, which is later than

[22] VII. 1. 2. [23] III. 3. 1. [24] I. 6. 19. 13-15; II. 9. 23. 3-5.

[25] This is the reading in *Āśv. Śr. Sū.*, II. 4. 7. The *Śāṅkh. Śr. Sū.*, an earlier text, reads *matsyavidaḥ* and puts *itihāsa* on the eighth day and *purāṇa* on the ninth, without varying the audience.

[26] IV. 6. [27] I. 6. 6. [28] II. 10. [29] II. 16. [30] XII. 1.

Yāska and earlier than Pāṇini and ascribed to about the fifth century B.C.[31] The *Bṛhaddevatā*, in several places, points out what hymns are regarded as, or contain, *itihāsa*.[32] The work, in fact, contains in verse a large number of legends connected with the hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda*, and 'comprises the oldest systematic collection of legends which we possess in Sanskrit'. It narrates, for instance, the *itihāsa* of Devāpi and Śaṁtanu[33] already related by Yāska. At a later stage, this story appears as part of a wider tradition in the *Mahābhārata*[34] where a third brother is mentioned—the name of the father is different—and Śaṁtanu has become Śāṁtanu. It is probable that a part of the lost *itihāsa-purāṇa* literature was incorporated in the *Mahābhārata*, the nucleus of which must be put in the early stages of classical Sanskrit. The conception of *itihāsa* seems also to have undergone a change in the course of time. In the *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya, which refers to *itihāsa* as a Veda,[35] the study of *itihāsa* is assigned an important place in the education of a prince, and is said to comprise *purāṇa*, *itivṛtta* (record of past events), *ākhyāyikā*, *udāharaṇa* (illustration), Dharma-śāstra, and Artha-śāstra or the science of polity.[36] The substitution of the name of *Mahābhārata*, as we know it, in the place of *itihāsa* would have served the purpose of Kauṭilya equally well.

A 'Bharata' epic appears to have existed prior to the Sūtra literature and the grammar of Pāṇini. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*[37] mentions *sūtra*, *bhāṣya*, *bhārata*, *mahābhārata*, and *dharmācāryas* together. Pāṇini[38] recognizes the word *mahābhārata* and provides for the accent. Vāsudeva and Arjuna were well known before the time of Pāṇini, as he provides for the formations *vāsudevaka* and *arjunaka* to denote the followers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna respectively.[39] Patañjali remarks that Vāsudeva here is not the name of a Kṣatriya; it is the name of 'His Honour', which shows that Vāsudeva was more than a mythological figure in his time.[40]

Apart from *itihāsa* and *purāṇa*, two other forms of narrative composition were in vogue in early classical Sanskrit, *ākhyāyikā* and *ākhyāna*. The *ākhyāyikā* class of composition is mentioned in the *vārttika* on Pāṇini IV.3.87 (*adhikṛtya kṛte granthe*); and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali (second century B.C.) here names three works as examples of this kind of composition: *Vāsavadattā*, *Sumanottarā*, and *Bhaimarathī*. To judge from the later story of Vāsavadattā, these seem to have been romantic tales. The *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini, IV.2.60, cites also the forms *vāsavadattika* and *saumanottarika* to denote one who studies or is acquainted with the

[31] *Bṛhaddevatā* (Ed. Macdonell), Introd., p. xxiii.
[32] VI. 107, 109; VII. 7, 153. [33] *Bṛhaddevatā*, VII 9; VII. 155.
[34] V. 149. 14-28. [35] I. 3, p. 7. [36] I. 5, p. 10.
[37] III. 4. [38] VI. 2. 38. [39] IV. 3. 98.
[40] *Athavā naiṣā kṣatriyākhyā, saṁjñaiṣā tatra bhavataḥ*

ākhyāyikās or romances of *Vāsavadattā* and *Sumanottarā*. With regard to *ākhyāna*, Patañjali cites the forms *yāvakrītika*, *praiyaṅgavika*, and *yāyātika* to denote one who studies or is acquainted with the *ākhyānas* or stories of Yavakrīta, Priyaṅgu, and Yayāti. Patañjali does not explain the difference between *ākhyāna* and *ākhyāyikā*, but it may be surmised that the *ākhyāna* was perhaps a form of tale simpler than the *ākhyāyikā*. Study and acquaintance (*tad adhīte tad veda*) presuppose a fairly long period of development; and texts which were studied in Patañjali's time must have been composed much earlier than the second century B.C. That there was an ancient version of the story of Yayāti seems certain, as is evident from the *gāthā*, quoted in *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*,[41] which is part of a dialogue (*saṁvāda*) between Śarmiṣṭhā, the daughter of Vṛṣaparvan, and Devayānī, the daughter of Uśanas. The distinctive character of *ākhyāna* as a form of literary composition seems to have been lost at an early date; and *ākhyāyikā* alone is mentioned in certain other texts. The *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya[42] mentions *purāṇa*, *itivṛtta*, *ākhyāyikā*, etc. together; while the *Caraka Saṁhitā*[43] mentions proficiency in *ślokas*, *ākhyāyikā*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* as a characteristic of the Gāndharva type of men. The *ākhyānas* and *ākhyāyikās* were no doubt in verse and seem to have been a popular form of narrative literature in the early classical period. It may, however, be noted that the ancient story of Śunaḥśepa found in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta-Sūtra* and described as an *ākhyāna* is composed in a mixed form of later Vedic prose and verse, and includes, besides, verses from the *Ṛg-Veda*.

Works on the art of dancing seem to have been composed at an early stage of classical Sanskrit. Pāṇini refers to the *Naṭa-Sūtras* of Śilālin and those of Kṛśāśva.[44] The *Mahābhāṣya*[45] speaks of the dancers of the school of Śilālin; and Pāṇini, in fact, provides for the forms *śailālinaḥ* and *kṛśāśvinaḥ* to denote those who study the *Naṭa-Sūtras* of Śilālin and Kṛśāśva respectively. Pāṇini provides also for the formation of the word '*nāṭya*' to denote the *dharma* (vocation) and the *āmnāya* (traditional lore) of the *naṭa* (dancer).[46] The vocation of a *nāṭyācārya* (dancing teacher) is mentioned in *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*;[47] and the early development of the allied arts of acting and dancing is shown by the mention of *kauśīlava* in *Gobhila Gṛhya-Sūtra*.[48] The *Mahābhāṣya*[49] speaks of a *naṭa* as *rasika* or a person skilled in the expression of the emotions.

[41] II. 4. 27. [43] I. 5, p. 10.
[42] Ed. Vaidya J. T Acharya, 2nd Ed. (Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1935), IV. 4. 43.
[44] IV. 3. 110-111.
[45] Ed. F. Kielhorn, 2nd Ed. (Bombay, 1906), II. p. 206: *śailālino naṭāḥ* (on IV. 2. 66).
[46] *Kāśikā* on IV. 3 129. [47] II. 2. 5. [48] III. 1. 17.
[49] On Pāṇini, V. 2. 95; II. p. 394 (Kielhorn, 2nd Ed.).

While we are not aware of any dramatic composition in the early classical period, Patañjali in the *Mahābhāṣya*[50] refers to the *ākhyāna* of *Kaṁsavadha* (the killing of Kaṁsa) and that of *Balibandha* (the binding of Bali) which appear to have been recited.[51] The *śobhanikas* mentioned by Patañjali as 'killing' Kaṁsa or 'binding' Bali before one's eyes seem to be professional players who accompanied their recital with dramatic action.[52]

It may be noted here that even the ancient *ākhyāna* of Śunaḥśepa was recited in a rather spectacular fashion in the *rājasūya* sacrifice. After the ceremonial bath of the king, the *hotṛ* priest, seated on a golden cushion, recited to the king, surrounded by his sons and courtiers, the story of Śunaḥśepa in prose and verse; and the *adhvaryu* priest, also seated on a golden cushion, responded by uttering *Om* at the end of each *Ṛg-Veda* verse and *tathā* at the end of each *gāthā* or Brāhmaṇa verse recited by the other. We are told that not only in the *rājasūya*, but also after a victory in war, the king should have this story recited (*ākhyāpayeta*).[53]

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT AND PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICO RELIGIOUS IDEALS

The gradual development of the philosophical schools must be placed in the early classical period. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, which is a fairly early work, to judge from the archaic forms used in it, refers to *sāṁkhya-yoga*[54] and to the control of breath and the practice of *yoga* and the signs of perfection in *yoga*.[55] The same work refers also to those who regard *svabhāva* and *kāla* respectively as the ultimate cause.[56] The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*[57] defines *yoga* as the firm concentration of the senses on the Self (*indriya-dhāraṇā*). The Upaniṣads formulate the basic doctrine of the Vedānta; and the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*[58] refers to those who have thoroughly discerned the goal by means of the knowledge of the Vedānta. The *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra*[59] mentions the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta separately among the sanctifying texts. The same text[60] and the *Mahābhārata*[61] refer to *ānvīkṣikī* which is explained as *jñāna-kāṇḍa* in Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary. The *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya[62] defines *ānvīkṣikī* as comprising Sāṁkhya, Yoga, and the materialistic Lokāyata doctrine which is mentioned also in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*.[63] *Ānvīkṣikī* seems to signify philosophical knowledge, the *darśana* of later times.

[50] On Pānini, III. 1. 26; II. p. 34 (Kielhorn, 2nd Ed.).

[51] Ed. Kielhorn, 2nd Ed., II. p. 34: *Ākhyānāt kṛdantāṇṇij vaktavyas tad ācaṣṭa ityetasminnarthe . . . Kaṁsavadham ācaṣṭe Kaṁsaṁ ghātayati. Balibandham ācaṣṭe Baliṁ bandhayati.*

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 36: *Iha tu kathaṁ vartamānakālatā Kaṁsam ghātayati Baliṁ bandhayatīti cirahate Kaṁse cirabaddhe ca Balau. Atrāpi yuktā—Kathaṁ? Ye tāvad ete śobhanikā nāmaite pratyakṣaṁ Kaṁsaṁ ghātayanti pratyakṣaṁ ca Balim bandhayantīti.*

[53] II. 3. 3. [54] VI. 13. [55] II. 9 ff. [56] VI. 1.

[57] II. 3. 11. [58] III. 2. 6. [59] XIX. 13. [60] XI. 3.

[61] XII. 59. 33. [62] I. 2., p. 6.

[63] On Pāṇini, VII. 3. 45; Kielhorn, 2nd Ed., II. pp. 325-6.

The Upaniṣads, in spite of their preoccupation with the knowledge of Brahman and the method of self-realization, contain moral precepts, as in the *Taittirīya*.[64] The ethical ideals of man are more elaborately propounded in the Dharma-Sūtras which belong to the earlier strata of classical Sanskrit. The *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*[65] inculcates the destruction of the evil propensities known as *bhūta-dāhīya*, those which consume sentient beings. They are stated to be anger, levity, hatred, greed, delusion, arrogance, ill will, falsehood, gluttony, calumny, envy, lust, discontent, and the lack of self-control. These constitute *ayoga* (mental distraction), and can be eradicated by *yoga* or the factors leading to the concentration of thought. These are freedom from anger and the like, charity, renunciation, sincerity, kindness, equanimity, self-control, friendliness to all creatures, earnestness, nobility, the avoidance of cruelty, and contentment. The *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra*[66] enumerates the eight cardinal virtues (*ātmaguṇāḥ*) and proclaims their superiority to the forty *saṁskāras* (religious rites and sacraments). The *ātmaguṇas* are kindness to all creatures, forbearance, freedom from envy, purity, ease, right conduct, magnanimity, and contentment. The *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*[67] quotes an archaic verse which declares: He who has no self-restraint, who is fat, impetuous, and loudly roaring like a humped bull, and who hurts living creatures and speaks according to his pleasure does not reach the abode of gods; but those who are lean by keeping short of food go thither. In such utterances as these we can trace the ethico-religious ideals of Indian culture as they emerge in the early classical Sanskrit texts.

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT AND THE TECHNICAL SCIENCES

Some progress in the study of the technical sciences seems to have been made by the end of the Vedic period. Mathematics (*rāśi*) and astronomy (*nakṣatra-vidyā*) are included in the list of subjects mentioned as being studied by Nārada in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.[68] A knowledge of the stars was necessary for the performance of Vedic sacrifices, and astronomy (*jyotiṣa*) was a recognized Vedāṅga. The *Śulba-Sūtras*, which deal with *rajju-samāsa* or the employment of the cords by means of which the various sacrificial areas are measured out, provide the geometrical knowledge required for the correct performance of Vedic sacrifices, and employ a number of technical terms. The cultivation of music in connection with later Vedic ritual is illustrated by references to persons who sang ceremonial *gāthās* to the lyre, as in the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*[69] and in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta-Sūtra*[70] where is found the expression

[64] I. 11. [65] I. 8. 23. 3. [66] VIII. 20 21. [67] I. 5. 10. 32.
[68] VII. 1. 2. [69] I. 14 (*vīṇāgāthinau*). [70] XVI. 1. 25.

vīṇāgaṇaginaḥ, those who sang to the lyre panegyrics in honour of the king in the horse sacrifice. The playing on lyres was a conspicuous feature of the *mahāvrata* sacrifice ; and the same text[71] indicates how the hundred-stringed lyre (*śatatantrī*) is to be made, and mentions other varieties of the lyre like *kāṇḍavīṇā* and *picchorā*. Here, the *udgātṛ* priest was the first to start the music.

Certain minor topics of study are indicated in the *Mahābhāṣya*,[72] which cites the forms *vāyasavidyika*, *gaulakṣaṇika*, *āśvalakṣaṇika*, and *āṅgavidya* to denote respectively experts in 'the science of crows' or augury, the characteristics of cattle and horses, and *aṅga-vidyā* which seems to mean physiognomy. Patañjali here cites also the form *kṣātravidya*, an expert in *kṣatra-vidyā* which is already mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,[73] and appears to mean the art of war. The same Upaniṣad mentions also serpent lore as a subject of study ; and it may be noted that a *sarpa-vidyā* text was recited before a group of men well-versed in serpent lore (*sarpavidaḥ*) on the fifth day of the *pāriplava* recitations in connection with the horse sacrifice. The *Āśvalāyana Śrauta-Sūtra* here reads *viṣa-vidyā*, or poison lore, in place of *sarpa-vidyā* which is the reading of Śāṅkhāyana.[74]

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT AND MEDICINE

Vaidyaka or medicine is mentioned in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*[75] as a recognized branch of study along with the four Vedas and the Vedāṅgas, Itihāsa, and Purāṇa. But medicine as a subject of study must be older than the second century B.C. ; and there appears to have been an extensive medical literature in early classical Sanskrit. It is stated in the *Mahābhārata*[76] that Nārada promulgated the musical arts (*gāndharva*), Bharadvāja the method of archery, Gārgya the history (*carita*) of the divine sages, and Kṛṣṇātreya the art of healing (*cikitsitam*). It is clear from *Caraka Saṁhitā*[77] that Kṛṣṇātreya is the same as Ātreya or Ātreya Punarvasu, who is represented throughout that work as expounding his tenets to Agniveśa.

It is stated in the *Caraka Saṁhitā*[78] that Punarvasu Ātreya had six disciples, Agniveśa, Bhela, Jatūkarṇa, Parāśara, Hārīta, and Kṣārapāṇi, who studied Āyur-Veda under him. Of them Agniveśa was the first to compose a systematic treatise (*tantra*), after which Bhela and the others composed their own *tantras*. It is well known that the *saṁhitā* of Caraka is based on the *tantra* of Agniveśa, and besides, it records the views

[71] XVII. 3. 14.
[72] On Pāṇini, IV. 2. 60. (Kielhorn, 2nd Ed.), II. p. 284.
[73] VII. 1. 2.
[74] XVI. 2. 15.
[75] On Pāṇini, I. 1. 1.
[76] XII. 210.
[77] I. 11. 65.
[78] I. 1. 30-33.

of numerous other authorities, e.g. Kuśa Sāṅkṛtyāyana, Kumāraśiras, Bharadvāja, Kāṅkāyana, Baḍiśa, Vāyorvida, Marīci, Kāpya, Vāmaka (king of Kāśī), Maudgalya, Śaraloman, Hiraṇyākṣa, Kauśika, Bhadrakāpya, Bhikṣu, Ātreya, Śākunteya Brāhmaṇa, Nimi, and others. The deliberations of these scholars under the leadership of Ātreya are vividly described in Caraka's compilation;[79] and they are thus represented as contemporaries of Ātreya and Agniveśa.

The extant *Suśruta Saṁhitā* also appears to be a compilation like the work of Caraka, and mentions in *Sūtrasthāna*[80] four earlier *tantras*: *Aupadhenava, Aurabhra, Sauśruta,* and *Pauṣkalāvata,* described as the sources of the remaining *Śalya-tantras.* There is a Chinese Buddhist tradition that Caraka was the physician of Kaniṣka (first-second century A.D.). Suśruta, Ātreya, Bhela, Kāpya, Parāśara, Hārīta, Kṣārapāṇi, Jātūkarṇya, and others are mentioned in the Bower Manuscript assigned to the fourth century A.D. This only shows that the Sanskrit writers on medicine were well known in Buddhist circles in the early centuries of the Christian era.

It is noteworthy that the early Sanskrit treatises on medicine were called *tantras* and not *saṁhitās.* The word *tantra* begins to appear in the Sūtra literature in the sense of 'customary regulations', 'procedure', etc.; for examples, see the *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra,*[81] the *Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra,*[82] and the *Āśvalāyana Śrauta-Sūtra.*[83] Patañjali in the *Mahābhāṣya*[84] cites the expressions *sarvaveda* and *sarvatantra* in the sense of 'one who studies or is conversant with all the Vedas or all the *tantras*'. He cites also the expression *dvitantra* in the same sense. The use of the term to denote a systematic treatise appears to be well established in the age of Patañjali. Very few early works are, however, known to have been called *tantras* if we leave aside certain texts of the *Sāma-Veda* schools like the *Ṛktantra* and the *Sāmatantra,* and the medical treatises composed by Agniveśa and others. The early medical *tantras* may be presumed to have existed in Patañjali's time, and this is made probable by his reference to *vaidyaka* as a recognized branch of study. Apart from individual works, some of the branches of the Āyur-Veda were also styled as *tantras,* e.g. *agada-tantra, vājīkaraṇa-tantra, rasāyana-tantra.* The *saṁhitā* of Caraka refers to physicians expert in *kṣāra-tantra* in connection with *kṣāra-prayoga* or application of acrid remedies.[85] Early specialization is shown also by the reference to a *kaumārabhṛtya,* or an expert in children's diseases, in Kauṭilya's *Artha-śāstra,*[86] this being a recognized branch of the Āyur-Veda.

[79] I. 12; 25; 26.
[80] IV. 9.
[81] II. 4. 11; II. 9. 24.
[82] I. 5. 1; V. 6. 30.
[83] I. 12.
[84] On Pāṇini, IV. 2. 60; Kielhorn, 2nd Ed., II. p. 284.
[85] VI. 5. 64.
[86] I. 17, p. 33.

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT AND THE POLITY

The date of Kauṭilya's *Artha-śāstra* is disputed, but it is not thought to be later than the first century B.C. It is stated at the very beginning of the work that it has been compiled from all the Artha-śāstras composed by previous teachers. It is well known that Kauṭilya's work cites the views of various schools, such as the Mānavas, the Bārhaspatyas, the Auśanasas, the Pārāśaras, and the Āmbhīyas, as well as those of individual authors like Viśālākṣa, Parāśara, Vātavyādhi, Bhāradvāja, Piśuna, Bāhudantīputra, Kaunapadanta, and others. The *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, which devotes more than one hundred chapters to *rāja-dharma* or the duties and responsibilities of kings, likewise mentions certain ancient authors on *rāja-śāstra*, or the science of politics, like Bṛhaspati, Viśālākṣa, Kāvya (Uśanas), Indra, Prācetasa Manu, Bhāradvāja, and Gauraśiras,[87] and refers also to ancient treatises on Nīti-śāstra, or *daṇḍanīti*, like *Vaiśālākṣa*, *Bāhudantaka*, *Bārhaspatya*, and that composed by Kāvya (Uśanas).[88] The similarities in the names of ancient authorities mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya points to a common tradition which presupposes a long period of development of the Artha-śāstra literature in early classical Sanskrit. The *Śāntiparvan*[89] and the *Artha-śāstra*[90] both mention *vārtā* and *daṇḍanīti* together, the one referring to agriculture, the rearing of animals, and commerce, as explained in Kauṭilya,[91] and the other to the science of government which henceforth becomes an important branch of study.

The growth of early classical Sanskrit poetry is outside the scope of this discussion, as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* receive detailed treatment in this volume.[92] It is noteworthy that Piṅgala's *Chandaḥ-Sūtra*, which is recognized as a Vedāṅga, deals mostly with classical Sanskrit metres, and is apparently based on the poetry of the time. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*[93] mentions a *Vāraruca-kāvya*, and cites here and there a verse or a line from contemporary or earlier poems. For example, the line *prathate tvayā patimatī pṛthivī* ('the wide earth is really wide with thee as lord') in the *pramitākṣarā* metre foreshadows the panegyric in *kāvya* style. The growth of secular poetry was, in fact, one of the most important factors in the evolution of classical Sanskrit literature broadening and humanizing the basis of Indian culture.

[87] XII. 58. 1-3. [88] XII. 59. 82-85. [89] XII. 59. 33. [90] I. 4; pp. 8-9.
[91] I. 4, p. 8. [92] Cf. Chapters II and IV *infra*.
[93] On Pāṇini, IV. 3. 101; Kielhorn, 2nd Ed., II. p. 315.

2

THE RĀMĀYAṆA: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTER

THE *Rāmāyaṇa*,[1] along with the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas, constitutes the epic literature of India, comprising the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa, the study of which has been rightly stressed as necessary for the correct interpretation of the Vedas. For over two thousand years, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, like the *Mahābhārata*, has been influencing deeply the religious and moral thought as well as the literary production in India. 'In fact, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are', declared Swami Vivekananda, 'the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization, which humanity has yet to aspire after.'[2] According to Macdonell, 'Probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the *Rāmāyaṇa*'.[3]

ORIGIN OF THE EPICS

The origin of the epics, as that of all forms of Indian literature, has been traced to the Vedas. There is, however, a difference of opinion as regards the particular portion of the *Ṛg-Veda* which is to be taken as the source of the epics. Oldenberg, who styled the *saṁvāda* (dialogue) hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda* (such as X.10 and X.95) as *ākhyānas* (ballads), started a theory that the oldest form of epic poetry in India consisted of prose and verse, of which the latter, containing speeches, was fixed and committed to memory. The *saṁvādas* have preserved only the verse portion containing dialogues; the prose portion comprising the narrative has been lost.[4] This *ākhyāna* theory was opposed by Max Müller and Lévi, who, however, discovered the germs of dramatic literature in the *saṁvāda* hymns, while Hertel and von Schroeder worked out a theory that the *saṁvāda* hymns constituted but the speeches pertaining to some dramatic performance connected with the religious ritual.[5] After stating these different views about

[1] For writing the section on the origin and development of the Rāma story in this chapter, the author records his special indebtedness to Dr. Bulcke's excellent work in Hindi entitled *Rāmakathā*, though he has looked up the original sources and several other books and articles. The introduction to the Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been utilized in writing about the text-history of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[2] *Complete Works*, IV. 4th Ed., p. 97.

[3] *ERE*, X. p. 574.

[4] Oldenberg, 'Das altindische Ākhyāna', *ZDMG*, 37 (1883), pp. 54 ff; 'Ākhyānahymnen im Ṛgveda', *ZDMG*, 39 (1885), pp. 52 ff; *Die literature des alten Indien*, p. 46.

[5] Lévi, *Le Théâtre Indien*, pp. 301 ff; Hertel, *Indische Märchen*, pp. 344, 367 f; L. von Schroeder, *Mysterium und Mimus im Ṛgveda*, Leipzig, 1908.

the nature of the *saṁvāda* hymns, Winternitz styles them as 'ancient ballads' and holds them to be the source of both the epic and the drama—the epic having been developed from the narrative, and the drama from the dramatic, elements of the 'ancient ballad'.[6] Though the epics can thus be connected with the *saṁvāda* hymns by the fact that both have a narrative to tell, there are essential differences between them as regards form and purpose.

The *gāthā-nārāśaṁsīs* (songs in praise of men), *ākhyānas* (narratives), *itihāsa* (legend), *purāṇa* (ancient tale), and similar other topics in the Brāhmaṇas whose recital formed an essential part of religious ceremonies at the sacrificial and domestic rituals, however, supplied real parallelisms with epic poetry, approaching it both in language and metre, thus supplying a significant link in the development of epic literature. From a comparatively short extent and simple subject-matter the *gāthā-nārāśaṁsīs* gradually developed into lengthy ballads and various song-cycles with intricate plots. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* represent but the finished products of this antecedent process, which naturally had some intermediate stages. Some episodes, like those of Sāvitrī and of Nala, which originally constituted independent epics, were later incorporated into the *Mahābhārata*, in the same way as the *Rāmāyaṇa* received similar episodes.

Attention may be drawn in this context to the differences between the epics and the earlier Vedic literature, which was mainly sacerdotal both in origin and in character. While the latter rose among the priestly class and was confined to it, as far as the transmission was concerned, not being intended for the general public, the former, though originating with the priestly class, was taken up by the *sūtas* (professional bards) for popularization among the masses. There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the exact nature and function of these *sūtas*, especially in the beginning: some regard them as Brāhmaṇa sages, the reciters of the Purāṇas, while others take them to be the progeny of *pratiloma* marriage. At any rate, it is undisputed that the later *sūtas* served as charioteers also, and being eyewitnesses of the battle-scenes they gave first-hand descriptions of what they saw, in their ballads. The epics, further, differed from the earlier literature regarding their subject-matter which was distinct from praises of the deities, sacrificial details, or high philosophical speculations which formed the main characteristics of the latter. The epics, on the other hand, dealt with the deeds of kings and heroes, descriptions of wars, and practical philosophy. At first confined to the royal courts as court-chronicles, once these epics came into the hands of the *sūtas*, they reached a larger circle comprising the entire populace. The *kuśīlavas*, or travelling singers, also

[6] *HIL*, I. p. 102-3.

played not an insignificant role in presenting the epics to the general public.

As will be explained in a later section, the *Rāmāyaṇa* calls itself a *kāvya*, an *ākhyāna*, and an *itihāsa*, as well as a work dealing with *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*.

STORY OF THE RAMAYAṆA

From the floating mass of the Rāma story current in his time, Vālmīki composed an ornate poem, which was subjected to additions of various kinds in subsequent times. The *Rāmāyaṇa* (the word literally means the history of Rāma) of Vālmiki, to which normally the term '*Rāmāyaṇa*' is applied, comprises, in its present form, seven Books containing about 21,000 stanzas. Before dealing with the problem of the transmission of the text of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, let us consider the origin and development of the Rāma story. In order to understand the origin of the Rāma story in its proper perspective, it is necessary that we should know the story as presented by Vālmīki.[7]

Bereft of the additional matter, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* may be told in brief outline as follows:—As a result of the palace intrigue, Rāma, the eldest son of Daśaratha, the king of Ayodhyā, is banished into the forest to the south in exile for fourteen years, after the arrangements for his installation as heir apparent were made complete; and Bharata, a younger son of Daśaratha who was with his maternal uncle at that time, is declared heir apparent instead. Rāma's wife, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa, his younger step-brother, accompany him to the forest. Broken-hearted at the separation from his beloved son, Rāma, Daśaratha dies. Bharata, on his return from his maternal uncle's residence, refuses kingship, follows Rāma to the forest, and entreats him to return and accept his rightful position; he is persuaded to go back to Ayodhyā as Rāma's regent only after the latter promised to rule as the king, after completing the period of his exile. Some time passes, and Rāvaṇa, the king of Laṅkā, abducts Sītā from Janasthāna, and carries her to Laṅkā. After several adventures in the forest, in the course of his search for Sītā, Rāma enters into an alliance with Sugrīva, whom he places on the throne of Kiṣkindhā after killing his brother Vālin. After crossing the waters, Rāma invades Laṅkā with the aid of Sugrīva's army. Bibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of Rāvaṇa, deserts the latter, and joins Rāma. After a fierce battle, Rāvaṇa is killed along with his sons, other relatives, and army. Rāma recovers Sītā and returns

[7] For the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, see Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, Part IV, 4th Ed. (1932), pp. 59-73; Macdonell, *ERE*, X. pp. 576-8; Winternitz, *HIL*, I. pp. 479-95; Oman, *The Great Indian Epics*, pp. 19 ff; Belvalkar, *Uttara-rāma-carita*, (HOS), introd., pp. xlviii-lv (Bombay recension).

to Ayodhyā. After an ideal rule for a period, Rāma abandons Sītā on hearing a scandal about her spreading among his subjects on account of her stay in Laṅkā. Two sons are born to Sītā. Rāma later performs the horse sacrifice. After crowning Kuśa, who had his headquarters at Kuśasthalī, and Lava, who had his capital at Śrāvastī, Rāma departs to heaven along with Bharata, Śatrughna, and the citizens of Ayodhyā, Lakṣmaṇa having died earlier.

ORIGIN OF THE RAMA STORY

Though the whole story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as summarized here, is a unit in itself, various scholars have declared the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be an amalgamation of two, three, or four, different elements, namely the palace intrigue resulting in the banishment of the hero, abduction of Sītā, legends about Rāvaṇa, and legends about Hanūmat and ape-worship. According to these views, the banishment of Rāma is the only element in the story having a historical basis.

Lassen, who may be said to have inaugurated the *Rāmāyaṇa* studies, stated that the *Rāmāyaṇa* had developed in four stages, indicating the work to be an allegorical representation of the Aryan conquest of the South. According to him, the original version of the poem did not carry the narrative beyond the banishment of Rāma to the Himalayas and the factors that led his wife Sītā and brother Lakṣmaṇa to accompany him in his exile. In the revision that followed, the place of banishment was changed to the Godāvarī, and a description was given of the protection afforded by Rāma to the hermits from the onslaughts of the aborigines. The account of the first attempts to subdue the inhabitants of the Deccan constituted the next revision, while in the final amplification, which resulted from the knowledge gained by the Hindus of the island of Ceylon, the description of Rāma's expedition against Laṅkā was incorporated.[8] After Lassen, Weber discussed in a comprehensive manner all the problems of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. His conclusion that the *Daśaratha Jātaka* is the source of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* has been controverted by several scholars, including Bulcke, on the principal ground that the *Daśaratha Jātaka* is a late work, based on oral tradition in Ceylon, which arose centuries after the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Further, as the *Daśaratha Jātaka* is silent about the abduction of Sītā and the description of the fight, Weber promulgated his theory of Vālmīki's indebtedness to Homer, which has rightly been assailed by subsequent scholars like Telang, Jacobi, Vaidya, Hopkins, and Bulcke.

The most comprehensive and systematic treatment of the several topics connected with the *Rāmāyaṇa* came from Jacobi in his *Das Rāmāyaṇa*.

[8] *Indische Alterthumskunde*, II. p. 505.

With regard to the origin and development of the Rāma story, Jacobi considers it to have been the result of the blending of history and allegory. He takes the palace intrigue and the exile to have real historical basis. According to him, the second part, dealing with the abduction of Sītā and the killing of Rāvaṇa, has its source in the *Ṛg-Veda*, and it represents the narration of terrestrial events based on mythological elements taken from the *Ṛg-Veda*. Sītā, the name of the heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is the goddess of agriculture in the *Ṛg-Veda*, and in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, she is spoken of as having arisen from the earth and as finally disappearing into the arms of the Mother Earth. Her husband Rāma would then represent Indra, and the former's fight with the demon Rāvaṇa would be but a portrayal of the Vedic Indra-Vṛtra conflict. In this connection, Jacobi refers to the significance of the use of the name 'Indraśatru', an epithet of Vṛtra in the *Ṛg-Veda*, and Rāvaṇa's son Indrajit in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where again, Hanūmat, the chief ally of Rāma, is called 'Māruti', son of the Maruts, reminiscent of Indra's association with Maruts, the storm-gods. Further, the name of the bitch Saramā, who crosses the river Rasā in search of the captured cows for Indra, occurs in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as that of a demoness who consoles Sītā when she was in Rāvaṇa's captivity. Jacobi, thus, would see in the *Rāmāyaṇa* a blending of a historical event with the Vedic myth.[9] The attempts of Julian v. Neglein to discover 'the outline of the Rāma-Sītā legend' in the Vedas have been characterized as 'fantastic expositions' by Winternitz.[10]

D. C. Sen traces the origin of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* to three sources: (1) the *Daśaratha Jātaka*; (2) a cycle of legends from South India about Rāvaṇa, a grand and noble Brāhmaṇa hero; and (3) a floating group of legends relating to ape-worship once widely current in India. According to Sen, Vālmīki welded together his immortal poem from materials taken from each of these three sources.[11]

Before examining these views critically, the traditional account of the origin of the Rāma story as given by Vālmīki in the introductory portion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* deserves consideration. It is stated there, in reply to Vālmīki's question about the particulars of a perfect man living on earth at the time, that Nārada narrated to Vālmīki the story of Rāma, of the Ikṣvāku family, bringing the account to his coronation on his triumphant return to Ayodhyā after killing Rāvaṇa. A little after Nārada had left, duly honoured by Vālmīki, the latter, while out on the banks of the Tamasā for his ablutions, was seized by the deepest pity at the sight of

[9] *Das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 86, 127, 131, etc.; Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 576; *HSL*, p. 311; Bulcke, *Rāmakathā*, pp. 103-6.

[10] *HIL.*, I. p. 516 nl; *WZKM*, 16 (1902), pp. 226 ff.

[11] *Bengali Rāmāyaṇas*, pp. 3, 7, 26-41, etc.; also Bulcke, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-10.

the killing of one of the fond Krauñca couple by a hunter, leaving the female bird to mourn the loss in pitiful tones. The sorrow (*śoka*) felt by Vālmīki at once found spontaneous expression in the curse uttered by him in the following perfect stanza (*śloka*):

'No fame be thine for endless time,
Because, base outcast, of thy crime,
Whose cruel hand was fain to slay,
One of this gentle pair at play!'[12]

While Vālmīki was contemplating on this stanza in a melancholy mood, Brahmā appeared before him and asked him to compile the *Rāmāyaṇa* as he heard it from Nārada. Brahmā assured the sage of a clear vision of all events, outward and inward, visible and invisible, open and secret, connected with the life of Rāma. Then Vālmīki composed a poem giving an account of all the incidents in Rāma's career. He taught it to the twin-sons of Rāma, Kuśa and Lava, who were born to Sītā after her abandonment in Vālmīki's hermitage and who were bred there. The young bards sang the poem called the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the accompaniment of a lyre, for the first time in the distinguished assembly at Rāma's horse sacrifice. The traditional account thus invests the *Rāmāyaṇa* with a historical character.

DIFFERENT THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE RAMAYANA

One thing that emerges from the diverse views given above, is that the scholars who have stated them are practically unanimous in holding that the basis of the principal episode of the Rāma story, that is, the account of the banishment of the hero, is historical, though they have indicated various sources for its so-called other elements. The topic of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as history will be taken up later, while considering the character of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Let us now try to find out the reason behind the attempts to split the Rāma story into different elements instead of viewing it as a single unit; and the clue to it is supplied by Weber's theory of *Daśaratha Jātaka* being the source of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. That there is an interval of several centuries between the *gāthās* and the prose portion of the Jātaka literature has been conclusively proved. Some scholars, however, hold that though posterior to the *gāthās*, the prose passages in the *Daśaratha Jātaka* are based, not on the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, but on an earlier version of the Rāma story. And the circumstance that in the

[12] *Rām.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 2. 14; Griffith, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki Translated into English Verse* (Benares, 1915), p. 7.

Daśaratha Jātaka there is no mention of the abduction of Sītā and the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, and no reference to Hanūmat, has led some scholars to regard these elements as later insertions in the Rāma story. The critical examination of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Daśaratha Jātaka* by Bulcke has established beyond doubt that the *Daśaratha Jātaka* is nothing but a perverted account of the Rāma story as given in the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[13] and so the argument based on the *Daśaratha Jātaka* can no longer be advanced in support of splitting the *Rāmāyaṇa* into different elements. Further, the *Daśaratha Jātaka* was preached with the object of consoling a son grieving for the death of his father, and hence there was no necessity in it to refer to the abduction of Sītā; and the killing of Rāvaṇa has been purposely omitted there as being contrary to the Buddhist tenet of non-injury, especially as the Buddha himself is represented as being Rāma Paṇḍita in his former birth.[14]

Bulcke's investigations confirm the traditional view that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is a complete unit, that it is not a mixing up of different episodes, and that the entire story is historical. There is no internal evidence in support of Jacobi's view seeking a Vedic connection for the abduction of Sītā and the fight with Rāvaṇa; there is nothing uncommon, improbable, extraordinary, or supernatural about these two episodes, and they can as well be taken as equally historical along with the banishment of the hero which has been unanimously accepted as such. In fact, Bulcke has shown that there is no evidence for the independent existence of the stories in connection with Rāvaṇa and Hanūmat before the age of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as is maintained by Sen and others.[15] If the marvellous, the fantastic, and the supernatural, are eschewed from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, there is nothing in the story that militates against its being historical. Despite a few inevitable scenes of divine intervention and a little exaggeration necessary for artistic effect, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* creates the impression that it has a factual foundation, and we feel that it may all have happened in those wonderful days of yore exactly as portrayed here. Thus, the entire Rāma story is historical and forms but one unit, as it is maintained by tradition.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RĀMA STORY IN THE RĀMĀYAṆA

From the internal evidence in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is evident that the Rāma epic, before being reduced to writing, was in a ballad form, and was sung in assemblies. Its first recitation, according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, was before the gathering of sages in the forest, followed by one in the thoroughfares of Ayodhyā, and finally in the palace of Rāma, at the conclusion of the horse sacrifice, before a distinguished gathering. When

[13] *Rāmakathā*, pp. 75-92, 462. [14] Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 91. [15] *Op. cit.*, pp. 110-2.

the *Rāmāyaṇa*, still in its floating stage of oral transmission, passed into the hands of the *sūtas*, additional matter of diverse kinds came to be associated with it. Several factors conspired to augment Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* by these interpolations.

The reciters in certain localities, in order to cater to the popular taste, laid emphasis on particular aspects of the story and worked them out in all details, or inserted delineations of various sentiments, sometimes heroic, sometimes erotic, sometimes humorous, and so on, as required by their audience. Glorifications of local deities, or sacred places, also supplied additional matter. The inclusion of geographical, or topographical, episodes, mostly based on the Purāṇas and *māhātmyas* (works setting out merits of holy places), was also effected under the influence of local and contemporary needs and tastes.

The fact that Vālmīki wanted to portray the life of an ideal man, supported by several references to Rāma as a human being, excludes the possibility of the hero of the epic being regarded as an incarnation in the original text as composed by Vālmīki. Many scholars, however, assert that Vālmīki's original intention was to show Rāma as a divine being and that his deification does not constitute an interpolation in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[16] It seems, however, to be reasonable that with the deification of Kṛṣṇa and the amplification of the theory of incarnation, Rāma also came to be regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu; and this accounts for a considerable amount of additional matter in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It can safely be assumed with Jacobi and others that the evolution of Rāma from a prince of Ayodhyā to a national hero, and finally to an incarnation of Viṣṇu, can clearly be demonstrated in the epic.

The account of the *putreṣṭi* of Daśaratha, in which gods are said to have approached Viṣṇu with the request that He should be born on the earth, and the description of the meeting between Rāma and Paraśurāma are instances of later additions under the influence of the incarnation theory.[17] There are also several incarnation legends in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*.

Most of the additional matter consists of repetitions and imitations—repetitions of the same incident, or of similar situations. Sītā's prayers to Gaṅgā and Yamunā, Rāvaṇa's approach to Mārīca, and the story of the spies of Rāvaṇa, may be cited as instances of repetitions, pure and simple.[18] The particulars of the faked head of Rāma are but an imitation of the faked figure of Sītā said to have been killed by Rāvaṇa.[19] Hanūmat's

[16] Cf. N. Chandrasekhara Aiyer, *Indian Inheritance*, Vol. I (Bhavan's Book University, 34), p. 37.
[17] *Rām.*, I. 15-17 ; 74-76.
[18] *Ibid.*, II. 52 ; 55 ; III. 31 ; 35 ; VI. 20 ; 25 ; 30.
[19] *Ibid.*, VI. 31 ; 81.

going to the Himalayas in search of medicinal herbs is also a later imitation of his feat of crossing the waters, which itself is repeated in two places.[20] The descriptions of the hermitages of Atri, Vālmīki, Śarabhaṅga, Sutīkṣṇa, Agastya, and others, are but echoes of similar accounts found elsewhere in the book, which belong to the same type. Under the same heading may be grouped also accounts of duels, battles, battle-fields, and so forth, constituting over sixty cantos of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* which come out of the same mould with but very little difference. There are also imitations of similar pathetic situations in the lamentations of different characters. Hanūmat's meeting with, and departure from, Sītā are imitated elsewhere.[21]

The motif of boons and curses has been invented to account for several incidents, and it takes the form also of predictions and anticipations. The boons granted by Kaśyapa, Manu, Dharmadatta, and Daśaratha, and the curses by Bhṛgu, Sanatkumāra, Devaśarman, Vṛndā, and Nārada, may be cited as illustrations. In some cases, justifications of what has happened to some of the characters are found by introducing incidents of their earlier births as in the cases of Daśaratha, Kauśalyā, Sītā, Mantharā, Hanūmat, Rāvaṇa, and Kumbhakarṇa.[22]

Purāṇic legends, bodily incorporated by later interpolators at several places, form another important item that has increased the bulk of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They, no doubt, impede the smooth flow of the narrative and are easily discernible as subsequent additions. The legends of Gaṅgā's descent, Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, Viśvāmitra, Nṛga, Nimi, Yayāti, and Śambūka, as also the accounts of Rāvaṇa and Hanūmat, are principal instances in point.[23] Some of these legends have been taken as serving to establish Brāhmaṇic superiority. Genealogical lists have been added at places in imitation of the Purāṇas. Etymological legends, invented on the basis of names of epic characters like Rāvaṇa, Sītā, Sugrīva, Vālin, Hanūmat, and Kuśa, have been freely introduced by the interpolators to explain their peculiar characteristics. Exaggerated descriptions and introduction of the supernatural and the marvellous constitute yet another feature of the additional matter. *rākṣasas* and *vānaras* were ordinary human beings in the original work of Vālmīki. With the passage of time, *rākṣasas* came to be depicted as monsters, descendants of the Daityas, and enemies of the gods, and *vānaras* as monkeys; Rāvaṇa came to be described as having ten heads, Kumbhakarṇa, as being the size of a monster, and so on. The burning of Laṅkā,

[20] *Ibid.*, VI. 50 ; 74 ; 101.
[21] *Ibid.*, III. 60 ; 62 ; 63 ; V. 39 ; 56 ; 68.
[22] Cf. *Rāmakathā*, pp. 273-6 ; 295-6 ; 325-6 ; 420-1 ; 424-9. Some of these relate to later Rāma literature.
[23] *Rām.*, I. 9-11 ; 32-65 ; VII. 1-36 ; 53-59 ; 73-82 ; etc.

the carrying of the mountain, and the fire-ordeal of Sītā, combine the miraculous, the marvellous, and the supernatural; these were evidently later additions. The descriptions of battles in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* also betray the working of a later hand. Poetic embellishments, and descriptions of the seasons, of Nature, and the Gaṅgā, and other similar elements which invest the *Rāmāyaṇa* with the character of the *mahā-kāvya*, have also given full scope to the poet in the interpolator for several additions. The introduction of long metres often at the close of the chapter also falls under later accretions.

The incorporation of didactic material, ethics, philosophy, polity, and similar topics, probably with a view to making the *Rāmāyaṇa* an encyclopaedia, seems to have been done under the Bhārgava influence,[24] which was responsible for transforming the 'Bhārata' into the *Mahābhārata*. *Nīti* and *dharma* were the special interests of the Bhṛgus. The *Kaccit-sarga* or the chapter containing formulated series of questions, the Lokāyata *darśana* of Jābāli,[25] and the ethical material interspersed throughout the epic, may have resulted from the Bhārgava association with the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

THE RAMAYAṆA: HISTORY OF ITS TEXT

Examination of the extensive manuscript material collected by the Rāmāyaṇa Department of the M. S. University of Baroda for preparing the Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* establishes that the text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been preserved in two recensions, the northern and the southern, each being further subdivided into three versions, the northern recension comprising (1) the north-eastern, (2) the north-western, and (3) the western; and the southern recension comprising (1) the Telugu, (2) the Grantha, and (3) the Malayalam versions.[26]

Unlike the southern recension, which preserves an almost uniform text in its three versions, the versions of the northern recension present peculiar features of their own. Though widely differing from one another, the northern and southern recensions have preserved the common text to a considerable extent, and this fact lends support to the hypothesis of their common origin from the Ur-Rāmāyaṇa. The north-eastern version, which is further divided into (1) Nepali, (2) Maithili, (3) Bengali, and (4) Devanagari sub-versions, and the north-western version, which comprises (1) the Śāradā and (2) the Devanagari sub-versions, present a common text for the major portion, suggesting a common source, the archetype. The north-western version, which agrees with the north-eastern one, contains verses

[24] Cf. Shende, *JUB*, XII, 2, September, 1943.
[25] *Rām.*, II. 100; 109.
[26] *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Critical Edition, Vol. I, Bālakāṇḍa, Fasc. 1, introd., pp. XXIX-XXX

common to the southern recension. The western version, preserved in four Devanagari manuscripts, which shows a fusion of the north-western version and the southern recension with which it sometimes agrees, has also some peculiarities of its own. It is further found, on a critical examination of the manuscripts, that portions missing in the north-eastern version are found not only in the north-western version, but also in the western version and the southern recension, indicating the common connection between the north-western version on the one hand and the western version and southern recension on the other, maintained along the course of the transmission of the epic.

While the southern recension has preserved the text in its original, or older, form, the northern one has polished it, both in form and matter, by simplifying the difficult readings of the southern text and modifying it to conform to contemporary thought. That the southern manuscripts present almost an identical text both in the southern scripts—Telugu, Kannada, Nandinagari, Grantha, and Malayalam—and also in the Devanagari script, will be evident from the fact that the Kumbhakonam and Madras editions, based on southern manuscripts, have almost the same number of cantos as the Bombay editions, based on the Devanagari manuscripts, with a difference of only 223 stanzas in the entire text.[27] The text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which the southern commentators, Govindarāja, Rāmānuja, Kataka, and Maheśvaratīrtha, expounded do not differ mutually but for occasional variations in individual readings. These commentators, however, represent two different groups so far as interpretation is concerned. Govindarāja and Rāmānuja follow the Viśiṣṭādvaita school, Kataka and Maheśvaratīrtha follow the Advaita school. Thus, there is no internal evidence in support of postulating two *Rāmāyaṇa* versions of the southern recension on the basis of the commentaries of Govindarāja and Kataka, as advocated by Ruben.[28]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* comprises 24,000 stanzas, divided into seven Books, whether the recension considered is the northern or the southern. But about one-third of the stanzas in the north-eastern and north-western versions and southern recension is absent from the other two.[29] The extent of the differences in the three regional texts, in so far as the *Sundarakāṇḍa* is concerned, is evident from the fact that the north-eastern and north-western versions and the southern recension have respectively 95, 107, and

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. XXXII.

[28] *Studien zur Textgeschichte des Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 1; *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Cr. Ed.), I, 1, introd., p. XXX.

[29] No reference is made to the western version here as no particulars about these matters for it are yet known. It may, however, be assumed that the western version also presents the same general features.

94 cantos, and 3,308½, 4,202½, and 3,948 stanzas. Of the 4,202 stanzas in the north-western version, 1,294 stanzas (i.e. 31%) are not found in the north-eastern version, 1,163 (i.e. 28%) are not found in the southern recension, and 554½ (i.e. 13%) are unique to the north-western version, not being found either in the north-eastern version or the southern recension.[30] Such textual variations are due to the fluctuations in the oral traditions of professional reciters, differently committed to writing by scribes in different regions of the country. Despite these differences in form, however, there are no changes in the narrative.

Before coming to the genuine and the spurious parts in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, reference may be made to the similarities and differences between the manuscripts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Both of them have northern and southern recensions, and the versions are based on scripts. While the northern recension represents the older form of the *Mahābhārata*, the southern recension has preserved the original text of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Devanagari manuscripts are composite in character, covering all versions, and the Bombay editions, based on the Devanagari manuscripts, are identical with the southern editions. The Bombay edition of the *Mahābhārata*, however, is quite distinct from the southern editions, and the Devanagari manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* are not so extensive as those of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and represent only a particular version.

It is generally accepted by modern scholars that Books II-VI along with parts of Book I constitute the original nucleus of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The writer of this paper, however, is of the view that the whole of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* cannot be rejected as spurious, though it was undoubtedly composed by Vālmīki *after* the other cantos were completed ; but parts of it, which relate to the Rāma story, namely, the accounts of Śatrughna and Lakṣmaṇa, the repudiation of Sītā, the birth of Kuśa and Lava, the horse sacrifice, the installation of Kuśa and Lava, the departure of Rāma, and a few minor incidents, are genuine.

In the first place, the *phalaśruti* (benefit declaration) at the end of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, which is taken to indicate the completion of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is an interpolation. Secondly, the argument that the original *Rāmāyaṇa* ended with the coronation of Rāma, because the *Rāmopākhyāna* in the *Mahābhārata* does not carry the story any further, overlooks the fact that *Rāmopākhyāna*, by its very nature, is restricted in its scope. Its purpose is not to delineate the life of Rāma, but simply to illustrate how people, fallen into misfortune, do in turn gain happiness ; and hence it is unnecessary

[30] *Sundarakāṇḍa, North-Western Recension*, introd., p. 61.

there to pursue the story any further. Thirdly, the history of Rāma, which Vālmīki purports to give in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is complete only with a record of all incidents connected with his life including his ascent to heaven.

THE NATURE OF THE RAMAYANA

In the opening cantos of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vālmīki styles it as a *kāvya*, a historical work, and an *ākhyāna*;[31] and it is also said that the epic has dealt with *dharma, artha*, and *kāma*.[32] As the first specimen of a full-fledged *kāvya*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is, indeed, an ornate poem *par excellence*. It answers to all requirements of a *mahā-kāvya* as defined in the works on poetics. In fact, the definitions and enumeration of the characteristics of a *mahā-kāvya* seem to have been based on the nature of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a *kāvya*. The style of this epic is simple, mellifluous, and graceful; unusual words and long compound words do not impede the spontaneous flow of its diction. It employs simple figures of speech such as similes and metaphors, taken from everyday life, and Vālmīki is famous for his similes. There is a fine portrayal of love (*śṛṅgāra*), heroism (*vīra*), and pity (*karuṇā*)—the principal sentiments according to Sanskrit poetics—throughout the work. Contrary to the practice of later poets who employ different metres and styles to delineate different sentiments, it is seen that Vālmīki uses practically the *anuṣṭubh* metre alone throughout the epic and maintains the same style; and he has been quite successful in effectively bringing out the sentiments intended.

Vālmīki is an adept in describing Nature realistically in many aspects—trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, oceans, clouds, dawn, and sunset. Of the forests and hermitages of sages we have several lifelike sketches in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Vālmīki aimed at depicting the life of a perfect man, the picture of an ideal character, and in Rāma we get the model to be followed in our different difficult situations. Rāma stands for duty and self-sacrifice, compassion and protection. The different characters delineated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* illustrate right conduct, individual and social; and in this epic stress is laid everywhere on the importance of moral values. There is a beautiful blending of thought and expression in this grand poem.

One of the objects of a *kāvya* is popular instruction, and Vālmīki successfully achieves it by placing before his readers the personalities of his characters conceived as concrete instances of the principles he had in mind. That the story is historical makes the poet's instruction more effective, for the readers know that whatever is taught here was actually practised by persons and is not a mere precept. The important fact to be borne in mind

[31] *Rām*. (Cr. Ed.), I. 4. 6 (*kāvya*); 11 (*ākhyāna*); *Rām*., VI. 131. 114 (*itihāsa*).
[32] *Rām*. (Cr. Ed.), I. 5. 4: *dharma-kāmārtha-sahitam*.

is that the virtues of the characters are spontaneous, irrespective of the actions of others. As a work of art, the *Rāmāyaṇa* embraces two distinct literary aspects—the realistic and the romantic. The characters are now human, now superhuman, now both. Some characters, like Vālin and Hanūmat, are blended with the sub-human, without a single jarring note or hint of incongruity. Incidents narrated in the course of the development of the story are realistic and yet supernatural. Except in a few discordant places, all through the poem there is a close nexus between character and action. The destruction of Rāvaṇa is the pivotal action, and almost all happenings bear upon that *denouement*.

It has already been indicated that the basis of the *Rāma* story is historical, and so whatever appears to go against the historical character of the work by being fantastic, marvellous, or supernatural, is almost certainly to be treated as a later addition. Vālmīki himself describes his work as *carita* (history). He could as well have stated it to have been the product of his imagination, had that been the case. The historicity of the work is further attested by the fact that the author has retained in the story certain compromising actions of the hero, such as the killing of Vālin, which he might as well have omitted from it, or altered, if the story were his invention. It may also be observed that since olden times Ayodhyā, Mithilā, and several other places, have been regarded as associated with the story of Rāma, which would not have been so, if the story had been purely imaginary like the fables in the *Arabian Nights*. Venkataratnam regards the *Rāmāyaṇa* as historical, but identifies Rāma with Ramases, the greatest pharaoh of Egypt. Historical accounts of the period of Ramases, however, run counter to what we find in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and so the epic does not support his view.[33]

Besides being a fine specimen of the poetic art and also history, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is also a Dharma-śāstra, a sacred text teaching righteousness. It expounds the principles of eternal law (*sanātana dharma*), and presents the ideals of good conduct (*sadācāra*), which is one of the bases of *dharma* according to the Smṛtis. The epic draws attention to other topics of the Dharma-śāstra, such as *nitya*, *naimittika*, and *kāmya* varieties of *karma*—regular, occasional, and optional duties.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* also deals with polity, administration, diplomacy, war, and other topics, which fall within the domain of the Artha-śāstra. The benefits of good government and democracy are exemplified in the Rāma-rājya, while the contrary is shown under Rāvaṇa. Many precepts relating to *kāma* (legitimate enjoyment) can be found at several places in the *Rāmā-*

[33] *Rāma, the Greatest Pharaoh of Egypt* (Rajahmundry, 1934); cf. Bulcke, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

yaṇa. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a Nīti-śāstra expounding lofty ethical ideals. The importance of moral virtues—simple living, modesty, restraint, obedience to elders, charity, and humanity—is fully stressed. It is easy to collect from the *Rāmāyaṇa* a string of ethical thoughts that have become proverbs.

CHARACTER OF THE RAMAYANA

Weber and Lassen consider the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be an allegorical representation of the spread of the Aryan culture to South India and Ceylon.[34] This view, however, is not borne out by the epic; for it does not show any change in the culture of the South as the result of Rāma's expedition, nor does its author seem to be quite familiar with the South. According to Wheeler, the *Rāmāyaṇa* symbolizes the conflict between Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism, and the invasion of Laṅkā testifies to the hatred of the poet who composed it towards the Buddhists of Ceylon whom he represents as *rākṣasas*.[35] This view, too, is untenable, because the *rākṣasas*, though opposed to the Brāhmaṇas, were, nevertheless, sacrificers and cannibals, which speaks against their identity with the Buddhists. Their description, again, does not indicate their being Buddhists.

In idealizing the hero as the paragon of virtue, the poet has depicted his adversaries as embodiments of sin and vice. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has an obvious allegorical significance and suggestiveness, as indicated in the *Ātmabodha* of Śaṅkarācārya, according to which the soul (Rāma) after crossing *moha* (delusion) here pictured in the form of a forest, and killing *rāga* (passion) and *dveṣa* (hatred)—symbolizing the *rākṣasas*—shines resplendently united with *śānti* (peace) in the form of Sītā.[36] There is also another interpretation which equates the *Rāmāyaṇa* with the *artha-pañcaka* doctrine of the Vaiṣṇavas, stating Rāma to be God, Lakṣmaṇa, the soul seeking God's grace (*śaraṇāgati*) as the means (*upāya*), and attainment (*prāpti*) of God as the goal (*phala*). But to stretch this idea of allegory and symbolization too far, and to try to see symbolism in every character and incident of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, would be absurd and far from the intention of Vālmīki himself.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* brings out the strength and weakness of the Aryan character. The superiority of the Aryans lay in the sternness of their character, their spirit of sacrifice, supreme regard for truth, love of adventure, and perseverance. Rāma is the embodiment of the high ideals of Aryan life. In him is presented the strange combination of a faithful and dutiful son, an affectionate brother, a loving husband, a stern, relentless

[34] Weber. *On the Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 14 ff; *HIL*, p. 192; Lassen, *op. cit.*
[35] *The History of India*, II. pp. 75, 227, etc.
[36] *Tīrtvā mohārṇavam hatvā rāga-dveṣādirākṣasān,*
Śānti-Sītā samāyukta ātmā-Rāmo virājate.

hero, and an ideal king. Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata represent ideal brothers, while Sītā a dutiful wife. In Daśaratha is brought out the weakness of the male for feminine grace, which resulted in great disaster not only to him but also to the kingdom. Prevalence of polygamy, some forms of superstitious practices, and evil effects of the caste system, are among the weak spots of the Aryan life hinted at in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

THE RAMAYAṆA AND THE MAHABHARATA: A COMPARISON[11]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* exhibit several features similar and also different. Being handed down orally from the earliest times, both the epics have undergone tremendous changes throughout their long history, and both cannot lay claim to any definitive text. The same phenomena operated in the text-transmission of both, and so the method followed for the constitution of the critical text of the *Mahābhārata* is being successfully applied in the preparation of the Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Like the *Mahābhārata,* the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the property of the whole of the Indian people, and the daily recitation of a *śloka* (stanza), a line, or even a quarter verse, from either epic is believed to confer religious merit on the reciter. Both the epics abound in numerous Brāhmaṇical myths and legends which frequently interrupt the thread of the narrative. It is further interesting to note in this connection that the same Bhārgava family responsible for incorporating *dharma, nīti,* and other material in the *Mahābhārata,* has added many episodes to the *Rāmāyaṇa.* There is a close resemblance not only in style, expression, and descriptions, as exemplified by parallel passages, identical similes and descriptions, but also in the mythology and philosophy of the two epics. The economic conditions and social usages represented in them are sufficiently alike, showing but few discordant elements. Neither the *Rāmāyaṇa* nor the *Mahābhārata* was recognized as an epic before the late Gṛhya-Sūtra period, and neither was developed quite independently of the other. The *Uttarakāṇḍa* contains many tales of the Gangetic plains, and later didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata* are generally laid in Kosala and Magadha ; so in their later development the two epics grew in the same locality.

With all these agreements, however, there are several points on which the two epics differ. While the *Mahābhārata* represents a mixture of popular epic and theological didactic poetry, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is a popular epic and ornate poetry at the same time. In the *Mahābhārata* are reflected the genuine feelings of its characters without any attempt at artistic embellishment, whereas the characters in the *Rāmāyaṇa* appear less natural and more

[11] Cf. Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas of India* (Bhavan's Book University, 36), introd., pp. xxxiv-xxxvi.

self-conscious through the conscious effort of the poet. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is much shorter, having only the extent of nearly a quarter of the present *Mahābhārata,* and it is still a fairly unified poem in its extant form. Unlike the *Mahābhārata,* which speaks of its three editions, the *Rāmāyaṇa* has no statement about its amplifications, or revisions. Whereas Vyāsa's authorship of the *Mahābhārata* is disputed by critics, Vālmīki is practically accepted by them as the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* What the *Mahābhārata* is for the Aryan kingdoms of the Kuru-Pañcāla, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is for those of the Kosala-Magadha. The *Rāmāyaṇa* reflects a greater simplicity of life among the Aryans ; and it shows an absence of any knowledge of the acquaintance with the Mlecchas. Other features of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are paucity of reference to advanced States, absence of elaborate military tactics in the form of *vyūhas* (arrays), existence of small kingdoms, and reference to an abundance of forests and forest life in the country. The *Mahābhārata,* however, presents a curious phenomenon in this respect: it shows a considerable advance in civilization over the *Rāmāyaṇa* period in war, in diplomacy, and in various aspects of society ; nevertheless it displays some archaic features such as polyandry and levirate, and consequently it belongs to a ruder and more warlike age. The nucleus of the *Mahābhārata* creates a much more archaic impression than that of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* If the *Mahābhārata* emphasizes more the practical aspects of life, the *Rāmāyaṇa* preaches the highest ideals of it. The *Mahābhārata* owes its sacred character not so much to its heroes as to the didactic sections added to it later, while it is the inherent purity of its hero and heroine that invests the *Rāmāyaṇa* with sanctity. The characters in the former strike us as human beings, whereas those in the latter appear to be idealized. As compared with the *Mahābhārata,* the *Rāmāyaṇa* has not only a more elevated ethical standard and a more serious didactic purpose, but also a much higher idealistic view of life and a wider popular appeal as well.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE TWO EPICS

There are several passages in the *Mahābhārata,* for which parallels can be found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* ; such, for instance, are the Nala episode, the cosmogonic passages in the *Ādiparvan,* the famous *Kaccit-sarga,* and the *Rāmopākhyāna.* Hopkins, Ruben, Jacobi, Sukthankar, and others, have invited attention to the parallelisms in the two epics. The peculiar character and development of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* preclude any categorical answer to the question whether the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the source, or the *Mahābhārata.* Every passage has to be critically examined in order to ascertain whether it is original to the *Rāmāyaṇa,* or to the *Mahābhārata* ; or whether both the epics independently borrowed from a third source. The

Kaccit-sarga in the *Mahābhārata* and its counterpart in the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[38] for instance, are of a very general character, having no direct bearing on the story, either of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or of the *Mahābhārata*; and the probability is that both have adapted the passage independently from some older *nīti* work. Now that the Critical Edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is being issued, better results may be expected from a comparison of it with the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* than from the vulgate of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Scholars hold diverse views on the relation of the *Rāmopākhyāna* to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sukthankar's exhaustive study of the problem, with the citation of as many as eighty-two parallelisms, conclusively proves that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the source of the *Rāmopākhyāna* and that the latter is an epitome of the north-eastern version of the extant *Rāmāyaṇa*[39] of Vālmīki.

While there are numerous references to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its author Vālmīki in the *Mahābhārata*, there is not a single reference to the Bhārata war, or to the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which shows that the *Rāmāyaṇa* in its present form existed prior to the time when the *Mahābhārata* assumed its final form. The works of Pāṇini and Patanjali, and the pre-Christian era inscriptions, which refer to Vāsudeva, Arjuna, and Yudhiṣṭhira but are silent about Rāma, however, indicate the priority of the nucleus of the *Mahābhārata* to that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This is further confirmed by the preservation of the archaic literary features of the *Mahābhārata* in contrast with the *Rāmāyaṇa* which displays characteristics of later epic poetry.

The 'Bhārata', the nucleus of the *Mahābhārata*, as shown by Sukthankar, was already long in existence when the *Rāmāyaṇa* was composed, and both were independent products, different in their origin and treatment. In the course of the transformation of the 'Bhārata' into the *Mahābhārata*, the Bhārgava redactors utilized the archetype of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as they had it before them. On the other hand, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the later epoch, was influenced in its further development by the *Mahābhārata*. The inter-relation of the epics is thus a very complicated problem of mutual actions and reactions.[40]

[38] *Mbh.*, II. 5; *Rām.*, II. 100.
[39] *Kane Commemoration Volume*, pp. 482-7.
[40] Cf. Sukthankar, *SME*, I. pp. 413-4.

3

THE CULTURE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA

THE *Rāmāyaṇa* gives a many-sided picture of a perfect life. We are accustomed to regard such a life as one led far away from the turmoils of the workaday world in some forest retreat and characterized by an unbroken course of introspection or meditation leading up to a state of mental equipoise or illumination. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, however, does not stop with this partial view. For along with the ascetics who embarked upon such severe discipline, we are always shown the figure of Rāma himself, towering above them all and honoured by these very ascetics as the special manifestation of the Lord for the protection of *dharma*. We are brought face to face with a series of difficult, baffling, and tragic situations, and shown how Rāma and the other principal characters react to them and ultimately tide over them without swerving in the least from the highest principles of spiritual life laid down in the scriptures. Inner perfection issuing out in virtuous action which overcomes evil and transforms the evil-doer is thus Vālmīki's main theme.[1]

THE PROSPERITY OF THE KINGDOM

When the reins of government are grasped by the hands of kings possessed of such heroic and noble outlook, there is bound to be progress in every department of the country's activities. The descendants of Ikṣvāku were all without exception noted for their piety and devotion to the welfare of their subjects. During Daśaratha's long reign in particular, Ayodhyā and the provinces attained a high level of prosperity; and it is again and again pointed out by Vālmīki that people had then a plentiful supply of the good things of life, of horses and cattle and corn and wealth.[2] Under his efficient administration the various orders of society discharged their proper responsibilities; and the high virtues practised by the king and his principal officers led smoothly and inevitably to the raising of the cultural level of the subjects. What better tribute can be paid to any ruler and his ministers than what Vālmīki, for example, repeats in the case of Daśaratha, namely, that there was none during his reign who was atheistic or untruthful or slenderly read or illiterate?[3]

The capital itself was in every way a source of attraction. Its roads were spacious, well laid out, and regularly watered to keep down the dust.

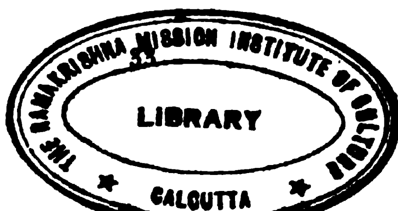
[1] This chapter is mainly based on Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* as it now stands.
[2] *Rām.*, I. 6. 7. [3] *Ibid.*, I. 6. 8, 14-15.

Everything was clean: the food eaten was pure, and the water available was 'sweet as the juice of the sugarcane'. Agriculturists and traders received special attention and protection. From various countries merchants naturally flocked to take advantage of the conveniences offered by Ayodhyā, and its streets looked beautiful with well-arranged rows of shops. When Bharata goes to the forest to persuade Rāma to return to the palace, we find the latter putting him a series of searching questions, of which many relate to this department of the administration. 'Are not the provinces', asks Rāma, among other things, 'filled with prosperous people and graced with abodes of the deities, and tanks, and places for distributing water? Depending on tanks for their water-supply, decked with mines, freed from all fear of fierce animals and unrighteous men, do not the provinces remain happy and contented? Do not agriculturists and cowherds find favour in your eyes? And do they not, remaining in their respective vocations, receive from you what they want and get over what they find harmful?'[4] Undue competition and oppression being thus removed through the vigilance of the king and his ministers, it became possible for all classes of society to breathe freely and strive successfully for full self-expression.

MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND EFFICIENCY

This state of affairs was maintained partly with the help of a thoroughly trained and equipped army. It was stationed in the various forts which were carefully provided with enough wealth, corn, water, arms, machines, and artisans. The capital itself was the abode of mighty warriors of straightforward ways, of great learning and culture. There were great car-warriors by thousands, whose arrows sped with irresistible force, but who would never degrade themselves by striking the fugitive or in any other manner violating the rules of chivalry.[5] Faithful and loyal because of their own sense of duty and honour, they were doubly attached to their king and country owing to the kind and dignified treatment given to them. 'Do thou so act, my brother', says Rāma to Śatrughna before the latter's march against Lavaṇa, 'that the soldiers might be well fed and delighted and never annoyed with thee. Do thou please them with sweet words. For the soldiers, when they advance against their foes, have not with them their friends or wives to cheer them up. Sufficient food and presents are thus the only things which can afford them comfort and pleasure.' To Bharata also he speaks in a similar strain. 'Dost thou not', he asks, 'at the proper time grant thy soldiers what thou shouldst, namely, provision and pay?' And he wisely adds the warning, 'Remember that if the proper time for

[4] *Ibid.*, II. 100. 43-48.
[5] *Ibid.*, I. 6. 21 5. 20-22.



these be passed, the servants become angry with their master and tax him; and great is the evil that springs therefrom'.[6]

The description of Bharata's march to the forest[7] and of the construction of the bridge by the *vānaras*[8] (monkeys) may be taken as typical examples showing the high level of efficiency attained by the military engineers of those days. 'I have despatched', says Bharata in the assembly, 'persons who serve for love as well as those who serve for money, with layers of roads and their keepers to prepare my way.'[9] And these included among others, as the poet shows, those who had a knowledge of the humidity or otherwise of the soil, brave delvers, architects, and experts in the construction of canals and watercourses. By their organized work trees were set up where there were none before; high grounds were levelled; hollows filled up; rocks cut through; bridges thrown over watery expanses; and tracts devoid of water made to overflow with it. In putting up the bridge across the deep, remarkable speed and dexterity were displayed by the forces of Rāma. Uprooting trees and crags, the *vānaras*, we are told, took them to the edge of the water by means of machines and threw them in, making the sea swell up to the sky. Some took lines for ensuring straightness while others took the measuring rod; and the co-operation was so perfect that within the short period of five days the marvellous structure stood complete and perfectly finished.[10]

SHARE OF THE PUBLIC IN STATE AFFAIRS

The king's personality was no doubt the mainspring of the progress which the country made; but it was by no means a case of a one-man show. The East is often described as having known and relished only despotic monarchy. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, however, presents an entirely different picture. For at every turn we find the ministers, learned men, and the principal officers of the army consulting together and shaping the policy of the State. On important occasions people from different parts of the land assembled and took part in the discussions. Free expression of opinion was allowed; and mutual consultation and independent thinking were expected to take place before any one spoke out his views. In the matter of Rāma's installation as heir apparent, for example, there was an exceptionally large gathering. Then in a mighty voice, solemn and resonant, Daśaratha announced his intention of retiring from the heavy duties of administration and giving his aged frame its much-needed rest. 'If what I have proposed is proper', said he by way of conclusion, 'and is to your liking, do you accord

[6] *Ibid.*, II. 100. 32-33.
[7] *Ibid.*, II. 80.
[8] *Ibid.*, VI. 22. 50-76.
[9] *Ibid.*, II. 82. 20.
[10] *Ibid.*, VI. 22. 58, 60, 68, 75-76.

approval to it, and advise me as to what else I am to do and in what manner. But if I have thought thus solely owing to a desire for personal satisfaction, do you find out some other means for my welfare.'[11] He then invited free discussion, that being acknowledged on all hands to be the surest method of obtaining dispassionate decisions. Even when the leaders, the citizens, and the inhabitants of the provinces, took counsel together and gave their unanimous support, the king wanted to make them think a second time and so he spoke again as if he had not known their minds. 'You have wished for Rāma', said he, 'as soon as you have heard my speech. This raises doubts in my mind. Do you, therefore, speak out your minds truly. Why, while I am righteously ruling the land, do you wish to see my son installed?'[12]

This principle of ascertaining the opinion and seeking the advice of the people on all important occasions was observed by ancient kings. As an extreme example of it, the *Mahābhārata* describes the aged and blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra discussing with his subjects and persuading them to permit him to retire to the woods. 'This Gāndhārī also', he pleads, 'is old and cheerless. She, too, has lost her children and is helpless. Afflicted with grief for the loss of her sons, she solicits you with me. Knowing all this, grant us the permission we seek. Blessed be you, we seek your protection.'[13] Even such an obstinate and wilful ruler as Rāvaṇa is shown as allowing free discussion in his assembly; and we find not only Bibhīṣaṇa but also Kumbhakarṇa vehemently criticizing from different standpoints his conduct towards Sītā. Although Kumbhakarṇa is determined to stand by his brother to the last, he does not hesitate to address him in public in his characteristically blunt and fearless manner. 'All this that thou hast done', says he to Rāvaṇa, 'is not worthy of thee. If thou hadst at the outset consulted us in the matter, we would have done what was proper and dissuaded thee. By luck it is that Rāma hath not yet slain thee who hast done this tremendous thing without serious reflection.'[14] Rāvaṇa's maternal grandsire, Mālyavān, also speaks frankly in the assembly and rebukes him for his defiance of duty, his addiction to carnal pleasures, and his unrighteous ways in general.[15]

SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Constitutional methods and military efficiency, however, were not the sole factors connected with the welfare of the people. Rather, one might put it the other way about: the king and his ministers remained constitu-

[11] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 15-16.
[12] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 23-25.
[13] *Mbh.*, XV. 8. 17-22; 9. 7-17; 10. 3-5.
[14] *Rām.*, VI. 12. 29, 34.
[15] *Ibid.*, VI. 35. 15-17.

tional, and the soldiers and other sections of the subjects discharged their functions conscientiously and without mutual encroachment, as a result of the high standard of education common in those days. Governmental methods and the cultural level became so interdependent that it was difficult to say which was the cause and which the result. Education was so organized that each section of the society knew not merely the details of fulfilling its own special function, but also the relative place of its contribution in the general scheme. It was also a part of the training to create the mental attitude needed to keep competition within specified and healthy limits. The work of the ruler and the leaders was thus to see that the proper kind of education was given to the different sections of society, and also to help all individually and collectively to blossom forth and spread their fragrance from within their own particular spheres. To the Brāhmaṇa, the king's question, for example, always ran: 'Do your disciples regularly wait upon you during their period of study?' To the Kṣatriya it was modified into: 'Do your disciples always remain mailed?' And so also questions were put to each of the other sections with the necessary variation.[16] The king's training had to be all-comprehensive; for he was the chief executive officer and had to know the art of bringing out the best from the varied temperaments that constituted his country's real wealth. He had to be a patron in every department of its activities and to arrange festivities and demonstrations calculated to stimulate the powers of originality and invention.

ROYAL PATRONAGE

The extent to which the members of the royal family afforded opportunities to specialists in every line can be gathered from the instructions issued by Rāma to Lakṣmaṇa on the eve of their departure to the forest. 'I want', said he, 'to distribute with thee my wealth amongst the Brāhmaṇas, ascetics, and many others, who depend upon me for their maintenance.' And going into details, he says among other things: 'Do thou confer upon that good Brāhmaṇa, the preceptor of the *Taittirīya* portion of the Vedas, who showers blessings on Kauśalyā every day, silk cloth, conveyances, and the like, till he is satisfied.' Similar fitting gifts were made also to those who lived under Rāma's protection, carried staffs in their hands, and studied the *Kaṭha* section of the *Yajur-Veda*.[17] While Lakṣmaṇa was carrying out these commands, there occurred an amusing, yet touching, incident. A certain learned but poor Brāhmaṇa, Trijaṭa by name, urged by his wife and accompanied by her, went to Rāma and asked for the wealth needed to feed his numerous children. In a vein of humour not common with him,

[16] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 38-40. [17] *Ibid.*, II. 32. 13-22.

Rāma asked the Brāhmaṇa to hurl a certain rod with as much force as he could summon. On seeing it fall strangely on the opposite side of the Sarayū, Rāma begged his pardon for the joke and most generously pressed him to take home all the cows standing in the intervening space, thereby removing his sorrows[18] even as Kṛṣṇa—with the consummate art that characterized all his actions—did in the case of his friend Kucela.[19]

MANY-SIDED NATURE OF SACRIFICES

Every sacrifice was an occasion for making all sections of society meet together, dedicate their skill to the success of the function, and receive adequate presents. It was more or less a 'World's Fair', or a 'Parliament of Religions', of ancient days. There were some sacrifices in which a powerful king through friendship or conquest, collected tribute from brother rulers who had hoarded wealth, brought it to a central place of his own choice, and distributed it to experts in every department of activity according to his standard of justice and merit. Rāma performed such a sacrifice ; and as the *Uttara-rāma-carita* puts it, it was the fight over the sanctified horse that created the opportunity for Rāma to recognize his sons Kuśa and Lava, and take them to the palace. The best type of sacrifice was of course considered to be that in which the sacrificer spent not only all that he managed to collect by the methods sanctioned in the Śāstras, but also the original wealth he had been enjoying. On the day after the ceremonies, then, he would be obliged to start life afresh and struggle hard for his bare subsistence. The poverty which became the lot of a paramount emperor as a result of performing the *viśvajit* sacrifice, which involved such renunciation,[20] was regarded as highly auspicious. Raghu was in such a state, with only earthen pots wherewith to serve his guests, when Kautsa, a disciple of Varatantu, approached him for the wealth to be given to his teacher. Heroic soul that he was, the monarch did not hesitate to give the assurance needed. How could he give room for the unprecedented scandal that a master of the Vedas came to Raghu's door to get some wealth for his preceptor, but was disappointed and had to go to another donor? The crisis was got over through the help of the gods ; and the people of Sāketa assembled to witness the remarkable scene of Kautsa refusing to accept anything more than what was due to his teacher and Raghu insisting that he should.[21]

Without *dakṣiṇā* and presents no sacrifice was thought complete ; and if wealth, power, long life, progeny, and even heaven were the results the performer had in view for himself, food, kind treatment, honour, rewards

[18] *Ibid.*, II. 32. 29-43.
[19] *Bhā.*, X. 81. 20-24.
[20] Cf. *Rām.*, I. 14. 42.
[21] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 24, 31.

for merit, chances to compete in the display of skill, and a redistribution of riches and political power were none the less benefits which sacrifices conferred upon society as a whole. In that sacrifice, for instance, which Daśaratha performed for being blest with children, Vasiṣṭha took particular care to summon not merely the priests deeply versed in the ceremonials but also 'experienced car-makers, highly pious and aged people, servants to assist in the various functions, artists, carpenters, diggers, astrologers, artisans, dancers, conductors of theatres as well as pure and learned persons proficient in the numerous branches of study'. 'Provide comfortable and spacious buildings', his mandate ran, 'for the Brāhmaṇas, the citizens, and the dwellers in the provinces. Let there also be separate quarters for the princes coming from foreign parts; and stables for the horses and dressing rooms and wide apartments for native and foreign soldiers.' All these were to be specially stocked with the best viands and the distribution was to be made with proper respect and not with the indifference natural on festive occasions. No one was to be disregarded out of anger, but each visitor, irrespective of rank, was to be highly honoured and entertained.[22] These instructions were carried out to the letter; and we are told that while the deities were being given their share of sanctified offerings, human beings, too, were equally receiving the best that the culinary art could supply. Brāhmaṇas and Śūdras, ascetics and *śramaṇas*, the aged and the infirm, and women and children, were continually fed by persons adorned with ornaments and wearing pendants.[23] The intervals between the ceremonies were utilized in beneficial ways. Mild and eloquent scholars would then, for example, engage in diverse arguments desirous of getting victory over one another.[24] It was while Rāma himself was celebrating a similar grand sacrifice that he chanced to see Kuśa and Lava singing in the streets and thought of securing their services for providing good music for all and an intellectual feast for those who could appreciate poetry. Being himself proficient in music,[25] he was very particular to invite to their performance all the musical experts attending the sacrifice. Persons deeply versed in literature and history and the various branches of the Śāstras were also specially summoned. All were soon struck with the sweetness of the music, the grandeur of the theme, and the graceful appearance of the singers, and expressed their desire to hear them again and again. Accustomed to reward greatness in whomsoever it was found, Rāma forthwith ordered Lakṣmaṇa to give them eighteen thousand gold coins and numerous other valuable presents.

[22] *Rām.*, I. 13. 14-17.
[23] *Ibid.*, I. 14. 11-18.
[24] *Ibid.*, I. 14. 19.
[25] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 35.

SERVICE RENDERED BY THE FOREST-DWELLERS

'We are the dwellers of the forest', came from the singers their significant reply, 'and we live upon fruits and roots. Living there, what shall we do with gold and with coins?' This was characteristic of all cultural education in ancient days. The training of the young was fittingly taken up by men who led sublime lives themselves and who had the broadness of heart to give to others their best, absolutely free. Society realized the value of such training, and wherever the teachers took up their residence, in the cities or in the forests, it voluntarily supplied them with the necessary means for the maintenance of their families as well as disciples. Kings and noblemen took advantage of their hunting expeditions to visit the forest dwellings, and after personal enquiry they arranged for the comforts of the teachers and students. The teachers, too, who were mostly *ṛṣis*, would in their turn continue to enquire if people were not maintaining the *dharma* as they had been taught in their younger days. When disturbed in their pious observances, or in their work of training and protection, these *ṛṣis* often went to the rulers and asked for military aid against the wicked. Rāma's life, not merely during his exile but also before and after it, was full of instances of such aid rendered. In more silent yet equally valuable ways the forest dwellers also contributed actively to the welfare of the householder section of the population. They gave shelter, as in the case of Pāṇḍu and his family, to those who wanted, for various reasons, to lead a life of retirement. And what Vālmīki did towards Sītā and her children and what Kaṇva did in the case of Śakuntalā are typical examples showing how these renouncers of the world poured forth their disinterested love in the service of the forlorn and the afflicted, disdaining at the same time to accept any wealth that might be offered to them in exchange.

THE IDEAL OF DHARMA

Dharma was then the chief factor that shaped men's lives. As the artistic sense colours the entire outlook of the artist and gives a touch of individuality and beauty not merely to his painting or music but also to his writings and discourses, nay, even his walking, eating, and sitting, so also *dharma* was meant to give a holy, blissful, loving, and heroic turn to the outlook of its votary and introduce its distinctive fragrance and sweetness into all the activities of his daily life. Through his thoughts and manifold contacts each individual was to evolve steadily and dedicate his virtues to the service of society. Different groups had their special *dharmas* too ; but neither an individual nor a group was looked upon as having acted in pursuance of *dharma*, if actual practice resulted in clash, oppression, misery, and the obstruction of spiritual evolution. It was recognized that the devel-

opment of personality could come about through religious rituals, gifts, civic duties, studies, discrimination, renunciation, and the like. But since each of these was capable of being accepted by one for a time, consciously or unconsciously, for acquiring eventual mastery over others and exploiting them for one's own selfish gains, the hidden motives as well as effects upon society as a whole had also to be weighed before deciding whether a particular form of activity constituted *dharma* or ran counter to it.

Rāvaṇa, for example, had all the advantages of Brāhmaṇa descent and Vedic studies. In due course he himself, his son, and Kumbhakarṇa underwent the hardest austerities for obtaining divine favour and they got it, too, much more speedily than many of the *ṛṣis* who succeeded only with their lifelong efforts. Yet, when the divine vision had disappeared and the boons had been secured, they employed their enhanced powers for the oppression of the virtuous instead of the betterment of the world. Rāvaṇa's son, especially, had his own favourite grounds for offering oblations; but when boons had relaxed his artificially kept up piety, his mind, like that of his father and of every demon, quickly gravitated towards its naturally aggressive and murderous levels. The extraordinary prowess which divine grace conferred on the demons was, therefore, systematically made to serve wicked ends and not to further the cause of *dharma*. Hence the very Rāma who fought for protecting the rituals of Viśvāmitra and other *ṛṣis* of the forest, was forced to order the destruction of Meghanāda after first obstructing his rituals and thereby cutting off the source of his irresistible power. Rituals or sacrifices, penances and visions of the deities are, no doubt, characteristics of a religious life; but they were considered to be in consonance with *dharma*, only if they broke down the barriers of the limited and aggressive ego and resulted in virtuous activities conducive to the welfare of all creatures.

BIBHIṢAṆA

In striking contrast was the behaviour of Bibhīṣaṇa. Born of Nikaṣā, like Rāvaṇa, he yet differed from his brother in the underlying motives for his penances. *Dharma* being his guiding principle, he could think only of the highest evolution as the gift worth accepting from the hands of the Lord. 'May my mind', said he with joined palms, 'remain ever fixed on righteousness even when I happen to fall into great peril! May I also obtain true knowledge without any instructions!' In Bibhīṣaṇa, as in Prahlāda, we have a signal example of *dharma* manifesting itself, transcending the limitations imposed by demoniac birth and natural affection towards relatives, king, and country. Endowed with strength and clearness of vision, as every follower of *dharma* invariably becomes, Bibhīṣaṇa quickly perceived the ruinous extent to which his brother was deviating from the path

of virtue. Fearlessly he spoke out his mind in the assembly; and he surrendered to the mercy of Rāma and his forces only after exhausting all his resources to make his brother alter his resolve. A true devotee of God and a man of action that he was, he fully vindicated the trust Rāma had placed in him. He always fought in the van of the army; and in every moment of crisis, as on the occasion of Indrajit's second overthrow of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,[26] or his special rites in Nikumbhila, or the illusion of Jānakī's execution,[27] it was Bibhīṣaṇa's calmness, wisdom, and resourcefulness that revived the courage of the troops and changed the fortunes of the battle. If Rāvaṇa represents divine grace and the higher elements in heredity becoming dissipated in self-aggrandizement, Bibhīṣaṇa stands for the heroic soul's clinging to *dharma*, overcoming systematically the baser elements in heredity and the numerous temptations and dangers of a vicious environment.

HANOMAT

Like Bibhīṣaṇa from the *rākṣasa* camp, there was Hanūmat from the *vānara* camp. Faithful, devoted, mighty, intelligent, and blest with long life, the two typify one of the many beautiful parallels presented by Vālmīki. Rāma entertained high regard for Hanūmat from their very first meeting. Said he, turning to Lakṣmaṇa, 'None can speak thus without mastering the Vedas with their branches. Nor is there any defect in his countenance, eyes, forehead, brows, or any of his limbs. His accents are wonderful, auspicious, and captivating. Even an enemy who has his sword uplifted is moved. Indeed, success awaits the monarch whose emissaries are so accomplished.'[28] Just as the lotus opens its petals before the rising sun, Hanūmat felt himself drawn irresistibly to the feet of Rāma who represented *dharma* in its manifold aspects. Rāma became his chosen spiritual ideal and he resolved forthwith to dedicate himself heart and soul to the promotion of Rāma's welfare. Rāma's name, or that of Sītā, brought inexhaustible energy into his limbs, and it was the secret of all the wonderful things he accomplished. The *rākṣasas*, he argued, ought to be impressed with the might of Rāma through a signal demonstration of the havoc which he, a single follower, could cause unaided within their fortified city. He, therefore, destroyed Rāvaṇa's pleasure garden and broke down the superb edifice dedicated to Laṅkā's deities, beating back the *rākṣasa* hosts with the bold challenge: 'I am the servant of the sovereign of the Kosalas, Rāma of heroic deeds. A thousand Rāvaṇas cannot cope with me in conflict. In the presence of all the *rākṣasas*, I will coolly lay waste the city and go back, having offered my

[26] *Ibid.*, VI. 74.
[27] *Ibid.*, VI. 84. 13-22.
[28] *Ibid.*, IV. 3. 28-34.

salutation to Sītā and achieved my end'.[29] A strict *brahmacārin* that he was, Hanūmat became uneasy since, during his search for Sītā, he had to let his eyes fall on many a lady in a sleeping condition; and he carried on vigorous introspection and reasoning till he was satisfied that his mind had not been tainted, or *dharma* violated, in the least.[30] Freedom in the sense of shuffling off the gross and subtle bodies with the remembrance of the Lord did not appeal to him as the goal of existence. 'May my devotion to thee remain unshaken', he therefore prayed to Rāma after the latter's coronation at Ayodhyā, 'and may my mind never conceive attachment unto any other object! Vouchsafe also that I may continue to live so long as thy stories continue to be told on earth!' Conversant with *dharma* and its subtle manifestations, Rāma graciously granted this prayer of his devotee just before he departed with others for the final plunge in the waters of the Sarayū.

VĀLIN AND SUGRĪVA

Vālin and Sugrīva, the royal brothers, form another pair of characters, whose relations with each other and with Rāma reveal the working of *dharma* in some other aspects. Knit together by love for a long time, they yet became mortal enemies owing to a little misunderstanding. It was honestly believed by all that Vālin had been killed in the cave by the Asura Māyāvin; but even then, Sugrīva agreed to rule the country only because the ministers and the citizens unanimously desired it, and by force they installed him on the throne. Vālin, however, after his victory and escape from the cave, could not have the patience or generosity to elicit all the facts or believe the explanations offered by his submissive brother. To fly into a rage was pardonable in such circumstances, if brotherly love was allowed to overcome it in a reasonable time; but, on the other hand, Vālin employed all his prodigious strength in pursuing Sugrīva and wreaking utmost vengeance on him. Sugrīva and a few friends of his including Hanūmat were able to keep themselves alive only because there was a solitary spot in the forest where Vālin's entrance had been effectively prevented by a sage's curse. In spite of his valour Rāvaṇa stooped to carry away Rāma's wife by stealth, while Vālin superior to Rāvaṇa in prowess, utilized that very prowess to capture Tārā from Sugrīva. If the recovery of Sītā by some means—and not *dharma*—were the only consideration, Vālin was undoubtedly the better and surer ally for Rāma, since Vālin had vanquished and humiliated Rāvaṇa once before. But if the achievement of Rāma's personal end was to fit in, as it ought to, with the scheme of maintaining *dharma* in its wider aspects, Sugrīva's friendship was the better

[29] *Ibid.*, V. 42. 34-36.

[30] *Ibid.*, V. 11. 50-45.

alternative. Sugrīva's evolution would then take place through the risk he would take on behalf of Rāma with a devoted mind, while the evolution of Vālin could be complete only with the humbling of his pride and the refusal to accept his more certain though patronizing protection. That Sugrīva could forget all ideas of self in the defence of Rāma's interests was clear from the single combat he had with Rāvaṇa before the commencement of the actual fight. 'I am the friend as well as the slave of Rāma', he shouted hitting the crown of Rāvaṇa off his head with a blow, 'and me, backed by the energy of that lord of the earth, thou shalt not escape today.'[31] Rāma did not fail to administer a stern rebuke to Sugrīva for exposing himself to such serious risk ; but the devoted Sugrīva had his ready reply. 'Knowing my own strength', he pleaded, 'how could I, O Rāghava, control myself on seeing the wicked one who carried away thy spouse?'[32] Vālin's final reconciliation with Sugrīva and concern for the future of Tārā and Aṅgada, and Sugrīva's own genuine repentance for having sought the death of his brother who had generously let him off alive after many a combat, have enormous power of appeal and show the noble heights of *dharma* to which those heroes could soar.

SANCTITY AND POSSIBILITIES OF MARRIED LIFE

Sītā is the ideal wife. Women were in ancient days considered to be the equals of men in the sense that whatever the husband did for the acquisition of merit or spiritual evolution was to be fully shared by the wife, who was usually to sit by his side during the ceremonies. If the husband fixed his attention upon the supreme Being while going through his daily routine and meditations, and the wife looked upon the husband as the Lord Himself in flesh and blood, there was no reason why heroic children with a passion for *dharma* should not be born to bless their wedded life. That marriage was to be considered a sacred trust to rear up a generation that would solve the unsolved problems of the family, country, or even of the world, instead of adding to them, was recognized by, and taught to, all who chose to enter the householder's stage. Here and there Vālmīki himself mentions directly, or through the medium of others,[33] that Rāma was an incarnation of the Deity for the removal of the world's distress occasioned by those who made life an opportunity for aggression and gross sense enjoyment. Thus the fact that Daśaratha and his wives made themselves fit channels for the descent of the Lord to the earth in the interests of suffering humanity, shows the maximum heights to which married life, properly led, could lift those who were bent on

[31] *Ibid.*, VI. 40. 10-11. [32] *Ibid.*, VI. 41-49.
[33] *Ibid.*, VI. 111. 11-14 ; 118. 6-10, 13-31 ; 128. 117.

practising *dharma*. A temporary defect in the mood of any one parent, as in the case of Nikaṣā, the mother of Rāvaṇa,[34] was sufficient to cause a congenital defect in the outlook of the child, which no course of studies or penances, might succeed in totally eradicating. On the other hand, by the virtuous thoughts and special disciplines of an expectant mother, it was possible to give such a moulding to the temperament of the child[35] that, as in the case of Kuśa and Lava, the training would progress by leaps and bounds and bring about a perfect development of the personality with the minimum effort on the part of the teacher.

SITA

By accepting the principles of married life, Sītā remained true to her lord in spite of the numerous trials she had to undergo. She felt it would be wrong on her part to stay behind in the palace when Rāma was to go alone into the trackless forest. 'I have been taught', urged she, 'by my parents to follow my husband in all conditions of life; I shall carry out that lesson today and shall abide by no other counsel.'[36] Indeed, the happiness of Rāma and the maintenance of his reputation were her guiding principles from the moment her father led her up to the altar for marriage. 'This Sītā, my daughter,' Janaka said addressing Rāma, 'do thou accept as thy partner in the observance of every *dharma*. May she be of exalted piety and devoted to thee, her husband, following thee like a shadow!'[37] Far from weakening her and effacing her capacity for independent thinking, this whole-hearted devotion to her husband only made her all the more conscious of her inner strength. She knew that the fire of her chastity was capable of reducing Rāvaṇa to ashes, but she deliberately refrained from such an exercise of her power. For she did not wish to deprive Rāma's arrows of their legitimate privilege of rescuing her and humbling Rāvaṇa whose insolence had swollen with his boons. In spite of her intense longing for a sight of Rāma, she was, therefore, unwilling to agree to the proposal of Hanūmat to free her from Rāvaṇa's control by carrying her on his back on his return journey through the air. Confronted by Rāvaṇa who had all the advantages of physical force at his command, she rose equal to the occasion and asserted the royalty in her in a dignified manner. 'May good betide thee, O Rāvaṇa,' said she in a spirit of moderation, 'and do thou take me unto Rāma, stricken with grief that I am. Enter into friendship with that best of men, if thou wishest to maintain thy life and empire. He is well known for his adherence to *dharma* and is kind to all who seek his shelter.'[38] She

[34] *Ibid.*, VII. 9. 22-23. [35] *Br. U.*, VI. 4. 14 ff. [36] *Rām.*, II. 27. 10.
[37] *Ibid.*, I. 73. 26-27. [38] *Ibid.*, V. 21. 18-20.

appealed to his sense of honour, too. 'Born as Kubera's brother,' said she, 'thou art heroic and great in prowess. How then couldst thou stoop to take me away by stealth after luring my protector out of the hermitage?'[39] And on every occasion of their meeting she warned him that even if the thunderbolt might leave him unscathed and Death himself spare him, there was no safety for him when Rāma, the lord of men, was enraged.[40]

Devotion to her husband broadened Sītā's sympathies instead of narrowing them. If Rāma was sorely afflicted by the illusion of her execution, she was equally tried by the sight of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lying stretched, lifeless as she thought, on the field of battle. Although her heart was torn asunder by the irreparable loss she thought she had sustained, her thoughts quickly went in the direction of the aged queen at Ayodhyā. 'I do not grieve so much for Rāma or the mighty car-warrior Lakṣmaṇa', said she, 'as I do for the wretched mother-in-law of mine who constantly thinks of the promised return of all of us from the forest.'[41] That same broadness of mind made her pardon the *rākṣasīs* who had ill-treated her in obedience to the mandates of Rāvaṇa. 'It behoveth the pious', said she meditating a while and addressing Hanūmat who offered to kill those cruel women, 'to show compassion to those who perpetrate crimes and are worthy of being slain. My sufferings, I know, have been due only to my own ill luck.'[42]

The worst trials for Sītā, however, commenced only after Rāma had slain Rāvaṇa and vindicated the honour of his family. In accordance with his order she bathed and went up to him expecting to be treated with overflowing love and tenderness. But a bolt from the blue awaited her. For in the presence of all assembled there Rāma announced: 'I have nothing to do with thee, O Sītā. Thou wert carried by Rāvaṇa on his lap and beheld by him with sinful eyes. I cannot, therefore, take thee back and bring disgrace upon my great family. My object being accomplished with the chastisement of the *rākṣasa*, thou mayst now stay with whomsoever thou likest'.[43] Although humiliated thus before the great assembly, she replied in a fearless and dignified manner, lamenting only that she had not yet been understood aright by her husband. 'O Fire! O witness of the people!' said she, circumambulating Rāma, 'protect me as my heart hath never deviated from Rāghava, my lord.' With this simple prayer she then dauntlessly entered the rising flames, making the very gods hurry thither to proclaim her spotless purity and persuade Rāma to accept her again.[44]

[39] *Ibid.*, V. 22. 22.
[40] *Ibid.*, V. 21. 23.
[41] *Ibid.*, VI. 48. 20-21.
[42] *Ibid.*, VI. 113. 37-38, 43-44.
[43] *Ibid.*, VI. 115. 20-23.
[44] *Ibid.*, VI. 116. 23-27; 117-118.

It was with similar prayers invoking the strength generated by her observance of the *dharma* of a chaste wife that she faced the second ordeal of exile. When abandoned in the forest, while carrying Rāma's future heirs in her womb, or called upon to adduce proofs of her innocence a second time before the people, Sītā undoubtedly suffered agonies, but remained patient like the earth from whom she claimed her birth, convinced that her virtuous husband thus treated her harshly only for upholding the *dharma* of the ideal king. The perfect wife that she was, she performed her proper duty by praying continually for the welfare of Rāma and his subjects, and never expressed a word of reproach or complaint against him for the attitude he chose to adopt. 'I have always with my mind, body, and words prayed for Rāma's well-being. May the goddess Earth now give me abiding place within her.' It was with these fervent words that she faced her second ordeal and disappeared for ever from mortal view. Her faith in Rāma's undivided love for her remained unshaken, though her physical eyes were not destined to see how it manifested itself in later years through his keeping of a golden image of her by his side during all his ceremonies. Rāma and Sītā showed that marriage could be an indissoluble bond resulting in mutual confidence and esteem, and in the rearing up of heroic sons in spite of enforced exiles, apparently inhuman treatment, and all the shocks given by a hostile external world. Nor is this strange in a country where the voluntary renunciation of one's nearest and dearest and a direct realization of the Lord as immanent not merely in one's own partner in life but also in all other objects of the world—*terrible no less than beautiful*—have been regarded as indispensable factors in any genuine spiritual life.

RĀMA

Rāma is presented in every context as the ideal man. There were occasions on which the great *ṛṣis*, or the celestials, stood before him with joined palms and urged him to remember that he was the supreme Being Himself. But he seldom moved from the position that he was a mere man, Rāma, son of Daśaratha.[45] No doubt he is described as the possessor of all the virtues a man can inherit or acquire, but there is not the least suggestion that he obtained them just because he was divine and not because he underwent the necessary discipline laid down for ordinary men. If he developed subtle intelligence, or philosophic wisdom, and could excel in military feats, or in answering controversialists, or even in singing, it was only because he diligently engaged himself in the study of the respective subjects and in serving his seniors and preceptors.[46]

[45] *Ibid.*, VI. 117. 6-11.

[46] *Ibid.*, I. 18. 28, 36-37 ; 22. 23.

When fighting with Indrajit who concealed himself by resorting to illusion, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa behaved only as any other person following the code of chivalry and honest warfare. They were both, as a result, quickly overpowered, rendered senseless, and bound with networks of arrows. Vālmīki makes the tragic element here complete by describing Sītā as viewing them in such a plight from the Puṣpaka and Bibhīṣaṇa as bursting into lamentations until Garuḍa raises them up and sets them free. There is also a sad touch of dramatic irony in Garuḍa's parting words. 'By nature', said he addressing Rāma, 'the *rākṣasas* have cunning shifts in fight, whilst thou, who art heroic and of a pure spirit, reliest on thy simplicity alone for strength. Thou shouldst never more trust these *rākṣasas* in the field of battle, for they are deceitful. And allow me to depart, O Rāghava, and do thou entertain no curiosity as to our friendship.'[47] The implication was that owing to Rāma's conception of himself as a mere human being, and not as Viṣṇu, he had reason enough to be curious as to why Garuḍa should leave the Lord and rush for his assistance on the earth below.

Rāma's relations with his brothers form an interesting set-off to those of Rāvaṇa with Bibhīṣaṇa, or of Vālin with Sugrīva. It so happened that circumstances forced Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata into widely different positions when Kaikeyī insisted on the granting of her boons and Rāma agreed to retire into the woods. But they both entertained and manifested the same devotion to him and the same spirit of submissiveness. Thus, if Lakṣmaṇa remained sleepless at nights, acting faithfully as a servant and bodyguard, considering that as the best path for his spiritual advancement, Bharata, too, expressed identical feelings when he condemned his mother, lived like an ascetic, or ruled the country in Rāma's name, using Rāma's sandals to symbolize his presence in the city. Śatrughna's attachment was equally strong. Obeying Rāma's instructions, he had slain Lavaṇa and raised up a beautiful city after the strenuous work of a dozen years. Unable to bear separation from Rāma any more, he then ran up to Ayodhyā and prayed for permission to stay permanently in his company. The ideal brother and king that he was, Rāma gave a fitting reply considering duly the demands of love and of government. 'Be not sorry, O hero', said he, 'for the *dharma* of the Kṣatriyas is to govern their subjects, and they should never be tired of living in foreign lands for that purpose. Do thou, however, come at intervals to see me, and return to thy own city. Forsooth thou art dearer to me than my life.' Some of the most touching scenes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are those relating to Lakṣmaṇa. For example, there is the scene where Rāma is shown as regaining consciousness first and griev-

[47] *Ibid.*, VI. 50. 53-57.

ing for the fall of Lakṣmaṇa whom he believes to have been slain by Indrajit's shafts.[48] There is also the scene in which Lakṣmaṇa, who had long before known from Sumantra of Rāma's future abandonment of him, coolly asks Rāma to kill him for violating the privacy of his talk with Yama. How could he hesitate to lay down his life for saving the entire race? Arguing thus Lakṣmaṇa had readily arranged the interview, and was not pained in the least to find that after all what Durvāsas wanted was only some food for satisfying his hunger!

Rāma's life was one of crosses. Always the situations that arose were of such a baffling nature that anybody less heroic, or less self-sacrificing, would have either fled from them or left them further complicated. But Rāma faced them all and put forth his best efforts to bring them under control. Many difficulties were solved through the exercise of his military tactics and prowess; the rest he tackled through his complete spirit of renunciation. Of renouncing people, Vālmīki has shown different types. One is the ascetic who abandons kith and kin and the pleasures of life at a stroke, and when the initial shocks of the mind are got over, struggles gradually to approach a state of bliss and tranquillity. Many belonging to this class, like Viśvāmitra in his earlier days, stumbled and fell occasionally in the course of their perilous onward march, whenever external forces proved too strong for the measure of self-control acquired by them. Others, like Agastya, or Bharadvāja, attained mental poise and spiritual freedom and remained prepared to help actively in the affairs of men, if the need for it arose. It was Agastya, for instance, who gave Rāma the weapon and the *mantra* which gave him additional facilities for overcoming Rāvaṇa in the final encounter.[49] Rāma's renunciation was of a different type. He, too, gave up his kith and kin and the pleasures and privileges of life, but not at a stroke. His struggles were spread out throughout a whole life, each succeeding step coming just when the mind had learnt to adjust itself to the tremendous changes in outlook and conduct caused by its predecessor. Thus, by the time he was reconciled to the loss of the kingdom and of his father, he was confronted with the loss of his wife. When, after meeting enormous difficulties, he recovered his wife and became installed on the throne, there arose a whisper of scandal, and he had to banish his wife to the woods though she was with child, the twins that were his future heirs. Long afterwards, his silent sorrows became mitigated a little when he recognized his children and took them to the palace; but the second ordeal which he imposed on Sītā resulted in her final disappearance from the earth. Lastly, to crown his human woes,

[48] *Ibid.*, VI. 49. 4-30.
[49] *Ibid.*, VI. 105. 2-29; 108. 3-4.

there cropped up the need for killing, or banishing, Lakṣmaṇa when only a few days more of life remained for them. In all these cases, the principle followed by Rāma was that of sacrificing a smaller circle of interests when wider ones had to be protected, and of maintaining tranquillity in spite of the pain resulting from such a procedure. Thus it was that when domestic interests came into clash, he satisfied Kaikeyī and gave up his own right to be installed. Similarly, when threatened with the danger of his being viewed by the citizens as a man of impure ways, instead of as a model of virtue and purity, he chose to give up Sītā, knowing in his inmost heart that she would pray for his success in the observance of the sovereign's *dharma*. And lest his words should be falsified, the man of truth that he was, he ordered the banishment of the faithful Lakṣmaṇa. There was no situation from which he shrank, or which he did not endeavour to solve, or at least smoothen, through the application of his prowess, his regard for truth and justice, and his readiness to sacrifice his interests to achieve the welfare of others. Though Vālmīki has not, at every turn of the story, stressed the fact of Rāma's being an incarnation of Viṣṇu, he has certainly brought out vividly that he was an embodiment of *dharma* in its manifold aspects.

CONCLUSION

Vālmīki's is not the only *Rāmāyaṇa* now available to us. In Sanskrit itself there is the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* which reminds the reader at every turn[50] that Rāma was conscious of his divinity at all times although he continued to behave like an ordinary man, suffering patiently the sorrows that fell to his lot. Many a poet of later years[51] has drawn inspiration from the glorious history of Rāma and has either translated these two *Rāmāyaṇas* into the regional languages, or produced original compositions giving elaborate treatment to particular episodes. Painters and sculptors have also been drawing their best subjects from this sacred theme; and in different parts of the country one may see mighty temples erected in honour of Rāma, containing his image in a heroic pose within the shrine, or his story depicted in colours all over the walls. In the afternoons or at nights, when work is over and leisure is available, here and there might also be seen groups of devotees, including women and children, listening eagerly to the exposition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and imbibing the principles of *dharma* as the ancients conceived it. The story-tellers are specially trained in the art, though there may not be much in common between their modern performances and those given by the

[50] e.g. Vasiṣṭha's advice to Bharata and the talk between Kaikeyī and Rāma (II. 9.).
[51] Bhavabhūti (Sanskrit), Tulasīdāsa (Hindi), Ezuttaccan (Malayalam), etc.

original chanters, Kuśa and Lava, the disciples of Vālmīki. In all these ways and many more, the ideals presented by the sage have spread to every corner of the country. There is no doubt that Rāma's character as a hero and as a man of virtuous action and that of Sītā as a model heroine have been instrumental in shaping the lives of many who genuinely aspire after *dharma.* Vālmīki has wisely upheld the ideal of *dharma* which has a comprehensive sweep and which enables its votaries, irrespective of their vocation or status in society, to enjoy inner perfection and freedom while dedicating their virtues to the welfare of others. If this ideal, exemplified by the sage in the motives and activities of his numerous characters, is grasped and put into practice, all the creeds may survive the present crisis, work side by side without the feeling of hostility, and make people intelligent, efficient, and self-sacrificing enough to solve the problems of the family, country, or even of the world as a whole.

4

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTER

I

JAYA, BHĀRATA, AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

THE present text of the *Mahābhārata*, the 'Great Epic of India', passing through the stages of 'Jaya' and 'Bhārata', came to be developed from a small beginning, first incorporating the story of the triumph of the Pāṇḍavas over the Kauravas, then the narrative in detail of the entire Bharata race, and finally the present encyclopaedic *śatasāhasrī saṁhitā* (a compilation of a hundred thousand stanzas). As we have it in popular recensions, it represents a literary activity of the Indian mind covering a vast period of about eight centuries. Its main story relates to the victory of the Pāṇḍavas over the Kauravas, and as such it was called 'Jaya', Victory or Triumph, and was also styled as history or *itihāsa*. This history of the triumph of the Pāṇḍavas forms the basis of a popular narrative which was turned into a ballad recited by wandering minstrels. It must have been the earliest recension of the epic, and naturally, must have been in this form a small text, say, of about 8,000 to 10,000 stanzas. It is just likely that this recension grew further into a Bhārata' with some 24,000 stanzas, when the theme of the work was enlarged upon a fratricidal war between the two vast armies, and may have included at least a brief account of the origin of the race of the Bharatas, the Bhārata-jana[1] of Vedic antiquity.

THE STORY IN OUTLINE

The 'Bhārata' may also have included the origin of the feud which, in its later stages, developed into a sort of an all-India war. The origin of this feud is stated to have been the desire on the part of one branch of the Kuru race to appropriate the legitimate place of the other. The two brothers, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, were physically handicapped: the one was blind and the other was under the curse of a disease that rendered him incapable of begetting children. So Pāṇḍu went to the forest with his two wives Kuntī and Mādrī for retreat and died there; Mādrī ascended his funeral pyre and Kuntī returned to the city of Hastināpura with the five sons. The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, numbering one hundred, felt jealous of the children of Pāṇḍu and started ill-treating and harassing them in several ways. Dhṛtarāṣṭra could not reject the claims of the sons of Pāṇḍu to a shelter

[1] *R.V.*, III. 53. 12.

in the royal household. He had to arrange for their training, which in those days consisted mostly of the knowledge of and practice in the science of warfare; and as these sons of Pāṇḍu, particularly Bhīma and Arjuna, excelled in their learning, the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra feared them as a source of danger to their supremacy. This was an additional reason for the ill-treatment to the Pāṇḍavas. In this ill-treatment, Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana, the first and the second of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, naturally took a leading part, supported by Śakuni, the maternal uncle, and Karṇa, a friend of Duryodhana. There were several occasions on which the Pāṇḍavas proved their superiority over the other side; for instance, at the time of the Pāñcāla princess Draupadī's *svayaṁvara* (election of a husband from the assembly of princes), when they won her hand under the eyes of the Kauravas. It appeared then quite clear that Yudhiṣṭhira would soon be the virtual king of the Kuru-Pāñcāla race. This frightened Duryodhana, who, in consultation with his friends, induced Yudhiṣṭhira to play a game of dice with Śakuni, the expert on his side, so that the latter would lose in the game everything and would be required to go into exile. The game of dice was lost by Yudhiṣṭhira and he had to go into exile; and further insults were showered upon Draupadī—the common wife of the five Pāṇḍavas—when she was dragged to the court room in a scanty dress and was called *dāsī* (slave). This naturally enraged Bhīma and Arjuna and forced them to vow revenge on the offenders. So, even though they had to go into long exile lasting twelve years for the sake of Yudhiṣṭhira, and remain away one more year incognito, at the end of the period they demanded their share in the kingdom. When this demand was refused, they prepared themselves for war; but the great war which lasted for eighteen days, brought a very costly victory to Yudhiṣṭhira, though he won back the kingdom. In outline this must have been the story of the earliest form of the epic called 'Jaya' or 'Bhārata'. In extent the work could not have then contained more than 24,000 stanzas.

THE GROWTH OF THE EPIC

But as time went on, attempts were made to enlarge this 'Bhārata' of 24,000 stanzas into an encyclopaedia of the stock of knowledge the Indian mind then possessed. A famous line of the epic says that everything in the world is contained in this work, and what is not found here will not be found anywhere else.[3] The enlargement was effected by including in it a large number of narratives, episodes, fables, as well as discourses on moral, philosophical, religious, and political topics. Actually, the northern recension contains 82,136 stanzas and the southern one 95,586 stanzas. It

[3] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 56. 33.

must be noted that the bulk of the present text is a work of centuries, and additions were being made even after the fourth century A.D.

The accepted text of the *Mahābhārata* makes mention of its three[3] beginnings, or opening points. This need not necessarily be interpreted as marking the beginnings of the 'Jaya', the 'Bhārata', and the *Mahābhārata*. But for the bare mention of 'Jaya' in the opening *mantra*, we get little knowledge about it; but there is mention of the length of the 'Bhārata' as 24,000 stanzas and of the *Mahābhārata* as a *śatasāhasrī saṁhitā*. As it was difficult to retain in memory such a large work, it is said that the two versions, the 'Bhārata' and the *Mahābhārata*, were made; but at one place[4] there is mention also of a much shorter version of about 150 stanzas, which is no other than the *anukramaṇīkādhyāya* of the new Critical Edition of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra* mentions two distinct works, the 'Bhārata' and the *Mahābhārata*. We are not in a position to fix the dates of the compositions of the three forms of the epic with any amount of certainty. Winternitz seems to be right when he says: '*One* date of the *Mahābhārata* does not exist at all'. That form of the epic, referred to as the 'Bhārata' or the *Mahābhārata*, did not exist in the Vedic period, and it was little known in the land of Buddhism. It therefore must have been composed during the period, say, from the fourth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. By the fourth century A.D., the *Mahābhārata*[5] must have attained its present bulk of about 82,000 stanzas, and have come to be popularly called a *śatasāhasrī saṁhitā*. Small alterations and additions continued to be made even after the fourth century A.D., as the comparison of the northern and southern recensions would indicate.

It has been shown above that the main story of the *Mahābhārata* relates to the struggle between the two branches of Bharata's race, the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. In itself this story would not, or should not, give us a volume of more than 10,000 stanzas, even on our allowing for it a latitude for the epic style. The larger bulk found in the later stages

[3] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 50. [4] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 62.

[5] The *editio princeps* issued in 1836 from Calcutta is the earliest printed edition and represents the vulgate text of the *Mahābhārata*. The editions in *puthi* form issued by Ganpat Krishanji in Śaka 1799 (A.D. 1877) and by Gopal Narayan of Bombay in A.D. 1913 are said to represent the text of Nīlakaṇṭha, the well-known commentator of the *Mahābhārata*. The Kumbhakonam Edition, claiming to be mainly based on southern Indian manuscripts, presents but a composite Telugu version. P. P. S. Sastri's Edition, however, represents southern Indian manuscript tradition somewhat better, but cannot be said to be a critical edition even for the southern Indian manuscripts; this has been shown by the late V. S. Sukthankar. The new edition of the *Mahābhārata*, mentioned above, is admitted by scholars to be *the* critical edition in the correct sense of the term. By 1959 it has published ten *parvans* completely, namely, *Ādi, Sabhā, Āraṇyaka, Virāṭa, Udyoga, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Strī, and Sauptika*. Parts of the *Śānti-* and *Śanti-parvans* are in the Press, and a few more are under preparation. When all the eighteen *parvans* are published in this edition, it will have kept in the hands of scholars all the material for a higher criticism of the epic.

of the development of the epic must have been due to additions of narratives about some prominent members of the race with a view to magnify their greatness; description of the grandeur of personages like Bhīṣma; insertion of stories regarding the birth of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas and their training; explanation of the superiority of one branch over the other in qualities appropriate to the Kṣatriya race; discussion about the question of succession and the methods adopted by the Kauravas to see the Pāṇḍavas out of the field; and inclusion of other incidents of maltreatment, exile, stay at Virāṭa's court, attempts at settlement and failure, Kṛṣṇa's exhortation known as the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the fratricidal war for eighteen days, and the victory of the Pāṇḍavas—all these might have constituted in a way the work called the 'Bhārata'. This 'Bhārata' in course of time attained a sanctity which raised it to the status of the Veda; in fact, it was called the fifth Veda. When the Vedas became a sealed book to women, Śūdras, and degraded or uncultured Brāhmaṇas, the only source of learning left to them was this 'Bhārata'. From time to time the 'Bhārata' received additions and amplifications here and there; it would seem that a conscious effort was made to convert it into a depository of all knowledge and wisdom of the human race. The present bulk of the epic is clearly due to the addition of extraneous matter such as genealogies mostly found in the *Sambhavaparvan*, a sub-section of the *Ādiparvan*, and the addition of episodes, some of which have the length of an epic. We have thus the stories of Śakuntalā and Duḥṣanta or Duṣyanta, Yayāti, Nala and Damayantī, Rāma, Sāvitrī and Satyavat, and several others, and also a large number of smaller stories. If we measure the bulk of these narratives, it would easily cover more than one-fourth of the whole epic. Another source of inflation is long and monotonous descriptions of battles. This item may account for about 20% of the total bulk. Lastly comes didactic matter such as is contained in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* found in the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, the sub-*parvans* on *rāja-dharma*, *āpad-dharma*, and *mokṣa-dharma* in the *Śānti-parvan*, and also similar topics in the *Anuśāsanaparvan*. The didactic matter covers more than 30% of the total volume, leaving for the main story only 10,000 stanzas, or so.

Over and above the eighteen *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*, there is one *parvan*, called the *Harivaṁśa*, which in the colophon of the work itself is called a *khila* or supplement of the epic. This *parvan* is divided into three sub-*parvans*, the *Harivaṁśaparvan*, the *Viṣṇuparvan*, and the *Bhaviṣya-parvan*, the total number of the chapters being 317 and stanzas over 16,000. The first sub-*parvan* is a Purāṇa in itself, and, in addition to legends, it narrates several genealogies. The second one gives an account of the life of Kṛṣṇa, and the third speaks of the future. The material of the

Harivaṁśa seems to have been drawn from the *Viṣṇu*, *Bhāgavata*, *Bhaviṣya*, and other Purāṇas. There are good many sections in this work lavishly glorifying Kṛṣṇa and the *Mahābhārata*. The *Harivaṁśa* is clearly written much later than the rest of the *Mahābhārata*, and does not possess the elegance and the high moral purpose of the epic.

DIVISION INTO PARVANS

We have no clear indications when the *Mahābhārata* was divided into eighteen *parvans*. Admitting that the original form of the epic should contain about 10,000 stanzas, a number approximately representing the volume of the present text of the *Ādiparvan* in the Poona Critical Edition, we may presume that the *parvan* division came into play at a much later date. The eighteen *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata* and the supplement *Harivaṁśa*, as we have it now are all of unequal length, the smallest *Mahāprasthānika* which forms the seventeenth *parvan* having only 120 stanzas, while the biggest, the *Śānti*, having as many as 14,525 stanzas. The *Śānti* and *Anuśāsana* together cover over 21,000 stanzas, almost one-fourth of the entire *Mahābhārata*. I, therefore, think that in the 'Jaya' stage of the epic, there may not have been division of the work into *parvans*; it may have been introduced in the second stage, but even there the number may not have been more than three or four. When, however, the epic attained its present bulk, the work got divided into *parvans* or Books, numbering eighteen, a number which became somewhat hallowed as the number of days taken by the battle in which the Pāṇḍavas were victorious was also eighteen. The same may be said about the sub-*parvans* which according to the southern recension number 2,000.

THE CHARACTER OF THE MAHABHARATA

Matthew Arnold, defining the epic form of poetry, said that the main story must relate to high personages and that its language and metre should be simple and dignified. It should contain vigorous dialogues. It should have interludes in the form of episodes. It must have a high and noble purpose. In the light of this definition, we can surely call the *Mahābhārata* an epic *par excellence*. The story relates to high personages belonging to the hallowed race of the Bharatas of high antiquity. The metres employed in the epic are simple, being mostly *anuṣṭubh* and *triṣṭubh* and the language used is simple, sonorous, and dignified. There are a number of racy dialogues here and there, and a large number of episodes. The moral objective of the work is propagation of the Eternal Law, covering the four human values—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. Of these, the first is to be regarded as the most valuable treasure. In fact,

the note of *dharma* permeates the entire poem, and is concisely expressed in the famous couplet:

> *Ūrdhvabāhur-viraumyeṣa na ca kaścit śṛṇoti mām,*
> *Dharmād arthaśca kāmaśca sa dharmaḥ kiṁ na sevyate?*

The introductory chapter of the epic narrates in detail several other objectives—one of which is being an eternal source of inspiration to future poets; but *dharma* is the supreme teaching of this epic, and so it is rightly regarded as the fifth Veda.

II

In sharp contrast with the practical unanimity which prevails among scholars as to the origin of the *Mahābhārata*, there is a wide difference of opinion among them regarding its growth and nature. Several conflicting theories have been propounded by them to explain the rise of the *Mahābhārata*, which may broadly be grouped under three headings—the analytic school, the synthetic school, and the traditional view. The traditional view will be dealt with after considering the analytic and the synthetic schools.

THE THEORY OF THE ANALYTIC SCHOOL

The first impression a critical reader would get from the *Mahābhārata* is that it is not the composition of a single author, not even of those of one generation; he soon notices that it is an assemblage of heterogeneous elements—a compilation involving many authors of varying abilities, who added a considerable amount of adventitious matter to the original epic nucleus from time to time. The great epic in its present form is the outcome of a long and continuous literary activity. This is the starting point of the theory which aims at reaching the epic nucleus by severe dissection. The analytic school assumes that the *Mahābhārata* does not conform to Matthew Arnold's definition of the epic, according to which 'the subject of the epic poem must be some one great complex action', and argues that whatever is didactic, episodic, or not in any way related to the epic story, did not form part of the original epic. There are, again, as the analytic school would show, discrepancies in the *Mahābhārata* which are inexplicable on the hypothesis of unity of authorship, as maintained by the synthetic school. Further, fortified as it is by the support from the tradition based on the express statement in the *Mahābhārata* itself that it had three different beginnings and three different forms, the analytic

theory has found general acceptance among the European scholars, and has been accepted to a great extent by Indian scholars. Here a brief reference may be made to the views of the main supporters of the analytic school, in the chronological order.

Lassen, who may be said to have inaugurated the modern critical study of the *Mahābhārata*, subjected the epic to a complete analysis. According to him, the epic as recited by Śaunaka was its second recension, which he places between 400 and 450 B.C., and which, he holds, was thereafter augmented by interpolations of a Kṛṣṇite nature alone. Sörensen's attempts at reconstructing the epic resulted in his obtaining at first an edition of some 27,000 stanzas, which he later rejected in favour of what he declared to be the original, genuine epic, containing seven or eight thousand stanzas. This Ur-Mahābhārata, Sörensen said, was of the nature of a saga which did not contain contradictions, repetitions, or digressions and which was the composition of a single inspired poet. On the basis of the Nature myth hypothesis then in vogue, Ludwig regarded the *Mahābhārata* as an allegorical poem on the struggle between the sun and the darkness of the night. In his view the capture of the Kurukṣetra by the Bharatas, the confederation of the five tribes, and so forth, constituted the historical kernel of the *Mahābhārata*. Later writers concentrated on theorizing about the nature and character of the 'epic nucleus' and formulating the criteria for discriminating the genuine from the spurious. This analytic method reached its highest watermark in Hopkins, who dated the different stages of the development of the epic as follows: (1) the 'Bhārata' lays (400 B.C.); (2) the *Mahābhārata* tale with the Pāṇḍavas as the heroes (400-200 B.C.); (3) didactic interpolations (200 B.C.-A.D. 200); and (4) later additions (A.D. 200-400); with (5) occasional amplifications (after A.D. 400).

THE INVERSION THEORY

In order to explain the 'inherent contradiction' subsisting between the story and the 'moral' sought to be inculcated by the epic in its present form, as exemplified by the victory of the Pāṇḍavas supported by Kṛṣṇa, through deceits and frauds practised by them in complete disregard of the rules of righteous warfare, Adolf Holtzmann started an ingenious theory, later on styled by Hopkins as the 'inversion theory'. According to this theory, the Kauravas were the heroes of the original *Mahābhārata*; and it is as a result of several successive tendentious revisions, that it finally received in the twelfth century its present form, which glorifies the Pāṇḍavas as its heroes. Though the theory was advocated by Lassen, Winternitz, and Meyer, it was criticized by Barth, Lévi, Pischel, Jacobi,

Oldenberg, and Hopkins. Theories analogous to the 'inversion theory', supporting the inversion of the original epic, were formulated subsequently by L. von Schroeder and Grierson, suggesting different reasons for the inversion. Curiously enough, Holtzmann, Schroeder, and Grierson suggested mutually contradictory motives for the inversion, which fact goes against the validity of the hypothesis itself. There is no external evidence to support the inversion theory, the epic itself being its sole basis; and the theory views only one side of the shield, completely ignoring the other. The Kauravas are, indeed, equally guilty, unscrupulous, and sinful—'only they are discreet and diplomatic in the extreme'.[6]

CRITICISM OF THE ANALYTIC THEORY

The analytic theory, which seeks to restore the lost epic nucleus, results from a superficial study of the *Mahābhārata* and insufficient understanding of its meaning, its basic plan, and the aim of its authors. The episodic matter, to which the western scholars take exception, is not secondarily introduced, but part of the original plan of providing instruction for the common man in *dharma* in a popular form; and so it serves the distinct purpose of filling in 'temporal hiatuses',[7] according to Pisani. Being part of the orignal plan, the episodic element has been evenly distributed at suitable places without in any way interrupting the course of narration or disturbing the balance of the epic as a whole. It may be observed that whereas the *Āraṇyaka-*, *Śānti-*, and *Anuśāsana- parvans* teem with so-called episodic and didactic digressions, the portions of the epic dealing with rapid action, as in the *Sabhā-*, *Virāṭa-*, *Sauptika-*, and *Strī-parvans* have practically no didactic or episodic element. Further, ancient Indian standards of literary criticism, holding moral edification as the chief aim of any work, are to be applied to the *Mahābhārata*, and these need not conform to the definition of an epic in some foreign literature. Creative authors in all ages are not fettered by aesthetic standards and text-book rules, and there is no justification for the surgical operation on, or the excision of, any limb of the epic on subjective considerations. The method of athetizing, or marking as spurious, passages on the basis of higher criticism—though legitimately 'applied to comparatively more recent and also much simpler works about whose historical context we happen to be better informed'—has been found completely broken down even in these cases.[8] The application of the analytic method, in the case of the *Mahābhārata*, would lead us, not to one source but to many sources. Moreover, the nucleus that we may possibly be able to 'discover in our analytical

[6] Sukthankar, *Meaning*, p. 17.
[7] *Festschrift Thomas*, p. 170.
[8] Sukthankar, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

adventures' is in all probability likely to be 'merely a projection of our own feeling'.[9]

THE THEORY OF THE SYNTHETIC SCHOOL

On the failure of the analytic method to arrive at any useful or intelligent result, attempts were made to understand the epic as a unified composition. Oldenberg, however, characterized the supposition that the *Mahābhārata* was a unified and harmonious whole as a 'scientific monstrosity'. No doubt, the *prima facie* impression created by the epic is 'of being a bizarre and meaningless accumulation of heterogeneous elements'.[10] Soon, however, this impression yields place to the idea of a unified and a perfectly balanced work. By excluding extraneous matter, Sörensen had arrived at the Ur-Mahābhārata which he declared to be the work of a single author. According to Dahlmann, who is the main exponent of what Hopkins dubbed as the 'synthetic theory', (1) the *Mahābhārata* is a unified work, a single organic whole, in which the didactic and epic elements have been artistically welded together by a single inspired diaskeuast keeping in view a definite plan and purpose ; (2) the epic story was invented merely for the purpose of illustrating maxims of law ; and (3) the date of this composition, or compilation, was not later than the fifth century B.C. While agreeing with Dahlmann in regard to the first part of his theory about the unity of aim and plan in the work, Jacobi and Barth, and also Sukthankar, did not accept the latter part of it. The Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* has amply demonstrated that large blocks of the text of the vulgate (which was the text used by Dahlmann) are comparatively late interpolations. Hence Dahlmann's text in its entirety cannot go back to the fifth century B.C.

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

The traditional view, as given in the *Mahābhārata* itself, accepts as its author Vyāsa, who was known also as Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana and who is mentioned as the son of Parāśara and Satyavatī. A close relationship is established between Vyāsa and the heroes of the epic by representing him as the procreator of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu on Vicitravīrya's childless widows Ambā and Ambālikā by *levirate*. After performing penance, Vyāsa composed the 'Bhārata' of 24,000 verses, which, according to the learned, is its extent, excluding the *upākhyānas*. To this was appended a chapter comprising the contents of the various *parvans*. Vyāsa taught this 'Bhārata' to his son Śuka and other deserving and promising students including Vaiśampāyana.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

There is a reference to another composition by Vyāsa, comprising six million stanzas and portions of which were sung among the gods, manes, *gandharvas*, and mankind ; this is a very late interpolation in the epic, and need not be considered in this context.[11] The reference to the riddles (*kūṭa-ślokas*) composed by Vyāsa to puzzle Gaṇeśa, who agreed to become his scribe on the stipulation that his pen should not cease writing for a moment and who modified it subsequently by stating that he would cease writing whenever he failed to comprehend anything, is a further interpolation in the already interpolated Brahmā-Gaṇeśa episode,[12] rendering invalid all speculations based on it.

THE THREE BEGINNINGS

The *Mahābhārata* states that the *sūta* (called Sauti or Ugraśravas) heard the epic recited at the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya by Vaiśampāyana to whom it had been imparted by his preceptor Vyāsa, and that *sūta* in turn, being entreated by the sages assembled in the Naimiṣa forest, related it to them *as* the *Mahābhārata*, during the sacrifice performed by Śaunaka. In the following stanza the *Mahābhārata* speaks of its three beginnings:

Manvādi bhāratam kecid āstīkādi tathā'pare ;
Tathoparicarādyanye viprāḥ samyag adhīyate.[13]

These are: (1) *manvādi* (beginning with Manu), i.e. from the very beginning of the present *Mahābhārata*, immediately after the invocatory verse (*maṅgala-śloka*), followed by the dialogue between Sauti and the sages at Śaunaka's hermitage ; (2) *āstīkādi* (beginning with Āstīka), i.e. from the description of the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya, where starts the *Āstīkaparvan* ; and (3) *uparicarādi* (beginning with Uparicara), i.e. from the commencement of the actual narration of the history of the Bharatas, where begins the *Aṁśāvatāraparvan*.

These three refer respectively to the three beginnings of the *Mahābhārata* as recited by the *sūta* from chapter one, by Vaiśampāyana from chapter thirteen, and by Vyāsa from chapter fifty-four, of the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* (corresponding respectively to chapters one, thirteen, and fifty-nine, of the Bombay Edition). The texts recited by these sages were respectively taken to be 'Jaya', the 'Bhārata', and the *Mahābhārata*, and the extent of the latter two was said to be 24,000 and 100,000 *ślokas* respectively. Some scholars take the extent of Vyāsa's work 'Jaya' to be 8,800. The opinion among scholars differ concerning the dates of these three redactions and the identity of their authors. The stanza on which P. P. S.

[11] *Mbh.* (B), I. 1. 105-6 ; (Cr. Ed.), 29*, p. 12.
[12] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), *Ādiparvan*, appendix I. 1.
[13] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed. and B.), I. 1. 50.

Sastri bases his view that the computation of the *Mahābhārata* is 100,000 *ślokas* if counted along with minor narratives, occurs among the interpolated stanzas in the Critical Edition.[14]

RISE OF THE MAHABHARATA

That the central theme of the *Mahābhārata* represents the story of the great war said to have been fought in times of yore between the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu for the throne of Hastināpura is almost undisputed. How from this saga the epic grew into the present *Mahābhārata* is now considered. Winternitz[15] and others state that the epic nucleus assumed the present form of the *Mahābhārata* by additions of different kinds including (1) legendary matter from the bardic repertoire having but a casual connection, or having no connection, with the epic heroes; (2) myths and legends of Brāhmaṇic origin and didactic sections pertaining to Brāhmaṇic philosophy, ethics, and law, stressing the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas; (3) cosmological, genealogical, and geographical matter, and local myths; (4) myths of Viṣṇu, and later, of Śiva; (5) fables, parables, fairy tales, and moral stories; (6) ascetic poetry; and (7) prose pieces and Brāhmaṇical legends and moral tales, entirely, or partly, in prose. According to Pisani,[16] the latest writer on the subject, the rhapsodic elements utilized by the author of the *Mahābhārata*, coming from different sources, comprised (1) the old 'Bhārata' and the *Mahābhārata* known to the author of the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra* and perhaps to Pāṇini; (2) single episodes relating to the heroes of the Bharata saga, their forefathers, and other famous kings and warriors; (3) edifying *upākhyānas*, religious and moral teachings, traditions about *tīrthas* (holy spots), etc.; (4) traditions about the pre-eminence of the Brāhmaṇas, of sacrifices, etc.; (5) didactic parts; (6) prose passages in imitation of the Brāhmaṇa literature. The pre-existing material, Pisani adds, was woven into a unified whole, according to a pre-planned design, by the author who added creations of his own, smoothed down differences, removed contradictions, and introduced modifications in other ways. The final author, or redactor, of the *Mahābhārata* is taken by Pisani to be a Brāhmaṇa, and on Sukthankar's authority, he was a Bhṛgu.

THE BHARGAVA ELEMENTS IN THE EPIC

Sukthankar's researches into the Bhārgava material in the *Mahābhārata* have supplied us with a clue to the evolution of the *Mahābhārata* as an *Epos* (unwritten narrative poetry celebrating incidents of heroic tradition)

[14] *Mbh.* (B), I. 1. 101b—102a; (Cr. Ed.), 27*, p. 11. Sastri, *Mahābhārata* (Southern Recension), Vol. I, introd., pp. x-xi.
[15] Winternitz, *HIL,* I, pp. 375-442.
[16] *op. cit.*, pp. 173f.

and *Rechtsbuch* (a Law-book) combined.[17] He finds that the Bhārgava material, concentrated mostly in the *upākhyānas*, could not have been the work of Vyāsa who, according to tradition, composed the 'Bhārata' without the episodic matter; nor can it be assigned to Vaiśampāyana, Vyāsa's direct disciple, who recited it in the latter's presence as taught by him during Janamejaya's snake sacrifice. Sauti, the next reciter, cannot naturally be credited with the converting of the 'Bhārata' into the *Mahābhārata*; but the 'frame story' recording Sauti's recitation in the presence of Bhārgava Śaunaka clearly indicates that the 'Bhārata' had, at a critical stage of its evolution, passed into the exclusive sphere of the Bhṛgus through the medium of the wandering minstrels. The Bhṛgus, who had specialized in *dharma* (established law) and *nīti* (right conduct), developed the epic by incorporating a large mass of didactic material, mostly in the *Śānti-* and *Anuśāsana- parvans*; thus they raised the *Mahābhārata* to the rank of a Smṛti, and combined popular instruction and edification along with entertainment. The didactic interlude forms, in fact, an integral part of the original poem in its only form known to us, and the didactic and the narrative ingredients represent the two aspects of one and the same central ideas of imparting the knowledge of *dharma*. The fact that this heterogeneous mass, the strange admixture of the epic with the *dharma* and *nīti* elements, presents an apparently homogeneous character is explicable on the assumption that the epic remained for some time in the exclusive possession of the Bhārgavas as their close literary preserve. The Bhārgavas thus took from the *sūtas* the 'Bhārata' and gave back the *Mahābhārata* as the common property of all, which still retained its traditional association with Vyāsa. Sukthankar held the view that all attempts to arrive at the epic nucleus is futile. He further stated 'that all attempts to explain it (i.e. the *Mahābhārata*) merely as an evolute of some hypothetical epic nucleus are merely examples of wasted ingenuity'. 'The Bhṛgus', he added, 'have to all appearances swallowed up the epic nucleus such as it was, and digested it completely; and it would be a hazardous venture now to reconstruct the lost Kṣatriya ballad of love and war.'[18]

THE EPIC: ITS RECENSIONS, VERSIONS, AND CRITICAL TEXT

A critical study of the manuscript material has shown that the *Mahābhārata* has come down to us in two main recensions, the northern and the southern, corresponding to the main types of Indian scripts. These recensions have been subdivided into versions according to the different provincial

[17] 'The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata: A Text-Historical Study,' *ABORI*, XVIII, pp. 1-76; *SME*, I, pp. 278-337.
[18] Sukthankar, *Meaning*, p. 110.

scripts in which the text has been handed down. Thus, the northern recension comprises the Śāradā or Kashmiri, the Nepāli, the Maithili, the Bengali, and the Devanāgarī versions. The southern recension, has given the Telugu, the Grantha, and the Malayalam versions. There are numerous differences, divergences, deviations, and discrepancies of several kinds, between the northern and the southern recensions. The southern recension is considerably longer than the northern one; this excess in volume is due not merely to the repeated addition of fresh passages and episodes throughout the work, but other factors as well. As compared with the northern recension, 'which is distinctly vague, unsystematic, sometimes even inconsequent', the southern recension 'impresses us by its precision, schematization, and thoroughly practical outlook'.[19]

The complete editions of the *Mahābhārata* hitherto published cannot be taken to represent either of the recensions mentioned above. The Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* that is being published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, is based on a very large number of representative manuscripts, and it fully utilizes the testimonia consisting of commentaries, adaptations, epitomes, parallel versions, citations, early translations, and the like. Besides the constituted text, it records not only the divergent readings of any importance, but also every line or stanza, including the seemingly most irrelevant ones, actually found in a *Mahābhārata* manuscript collated for the edition, thus presenting a digest of the manuscript tradition of the *Mahābhārata* extending over nearly a thousand years. The editors have tried to reach, in it 'the form which the poem had before its spreading through India . . . the archetype which stands at the basis of the different recensions and branches of traditions'.[20] It does not claim to be a reconstruction of the Ur-Mahābhārata or the Ur-Bhārata, nor is it an exact replica of the poem as recited by Vaiśampāyana before Janamejaya. 'It only claims', as modestly put by Sukthankar, 'to be the most ancient one (i.e. text) according to the direct line of transmission, purer than the others in so far as it is free from the obvious errors of copying and spurious additions'.[21]

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CRITICAL TEXT

A brief reference to the principles followed in constituting the text of the Critical Edition may not be out of place here.[22] Complete concord between the northern and southern recensions is accepted by the editors as the greatest indication of originality. Where two classes of manuscripts

[19] Sukthankar, *Prolegomena*, p. XXXVI; *SME*, I. p. 48.

[20] Pisani, *ABORI*, XXIX, p. 303.

[21] *Prolegomena*, p. CI; *SME*, p. 129.

[22] Cf. Sukthankar, *Prolegomena*, pp. LXXVI ff; *ABORI*, XVI, pp. 90-91; *Āraṇyakaparvan*, Introd., p. xviii; *SME*, I. pp. 109 ff, 246, 159.

agree on a textual unit in opposition to other two classes, preference is given to that side on which the Kashmiri manuscripts stand. The readings that suggest best how the other readings might have arisen are selected. Interpretation is given precedence over emendation, and the more difficult readings are preferred to the simpler ones. Hiatuses in the text, irregular *sandhis*, and grammatical and metrical irregularities, are retained where they are supported by manuscripts, and in cases where the variants in the manuscripts could be explained on the assumption of attempts at regularization of the manuscripts. Where the balance of manuscript evidence is equally divided, showing disconcerting parallelism, and the readings are deemed 'less than certain', the fact is indicated by wavy lines under the constituted text. The peculiar conditions of the text transmission has necessitated an eclectic but cautious utilization of all classes of manuscript in preference to reliance on a single codex. Despite these difficulties and limitations, the text-reconstruction of such a fluid text is not so discouraging as might appear at first sight. For one thing, there is a considerable portion of the text where the northern and southern recensions are in full agreement, and secondly variants, at least really important ones, do not exist. Further, the agreement between the versions having the least chances of mutual borrowings or contamination (e.g. Śāradā and Malayalam) invests a fairly large proportion of the text with an amount of certainty. The element of uncertainty hangs around a small portion only.

As it is to be expected, the constituted text is by no means smooth in comparison with the vulgate text, which is fairly readable and which at places would appear to be even better than the former, on account of the continuous efforts taken by generations of anonymous scholars and poets to make it smooth, interesting, and popular. The constituted text inherits from the old poem several archaism and loose constructions; it lacks syntactical concord and literary finish, and also has many contradictions and superfluities. These shortcomings are more than balanced by the fact that it eschews from the text puerile modern accretions and obvious errors of repetition; and at the same time it solves many a textual riddle resulting from long-standing corruptions and unskilful conflations. The constituted text of the Critical Edition excludes several passages which tradition has been hitherto associating with the *Mahābhārata*,[23] and their exclusion may

[23] In this connection we may note here the Brahmā-Gaṇeśa episode, the dramatic scene at *Draupadī-svayaṁvara*, and the *Kaṇika-nīti* in the *Ādiparvan*; the scene of Śrī Kṛṣṇa miraculously clothing Draupadī, and the scene in which Kuntī takes leave of the exiled Pāṇḍavas in the *Sabhāparvan*; the temptation of Arjuna by Urvaśī, the killing of Naraka and the rescue of the Earth, and the visit of Durvāsas to Yudhiṣṭhira, in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*; *Durgā-stotra* in the *Virāṭa-* and *Bhīṣma- parvans*, and the repetitious episode of the death of Śveta in the *Bhīṣmaparvan*; one chapter from the *Sanatsujātīya* in the *Udyogaparvan*; and the lengthy *Ṣoḍaśarājakīya* in the *Droṇaparvan*.

prima facie appear as detracting from the beauty of the work ; but it is no loss at all. The manuscripts prove that all these passages relegated to the foot-notes or appendix have been but recent additions ; and besides, on literary and aesthetic grounds, their excision from the constituted text is perfectly justified.

THE CHARACTER OF THE MAHABHARATA

Finally, turning to the character of the *Mahābhārata*, we find that several scholars, including Dahlmann, Ludwig, and Lassen, whose views about the rise of the *Mahābhārata* have been mentioned earlier, have denied historical reality to the poem and offered symbolic or allegorical explanations. Lassen, for instance, regarded the *dramatis personae* of the epic not as ordinary human beings but as historical conditions. Ludwig pressed into service the Nature myth for presenting a symbolic interpretation of the epic. Recently Lachmi Dhar brought in the idea of the solar myth, Uṣas, dragon of darkness, and so on, for explaining the *Mahābhārata*. According to Dahlmann, the epic 'was composed with the avowed and exclusive object of expounding all the different aspects of Hindu law, in the widest sense of the term, not omitting even its historical and archaic features and oddities'.[24] Thadani takes the *Mahābhārata* to be the symbolization of the six systems of Hindu philosophy and their conflict. Even though scholars who held, and still hold, divergent views about the origin and character of the *Mahābhārata* have interpreted it in the light of the meaning and purpose they try to discover beyond what one meets in the plain words of the text, they cannot be discredited simply because they do not present a unanimous conclusion ; they would have merited greater consideration if they had received the support of the Indian tradition and the epic itself.

It is, indeed, strange that all the interpretations noted above refuse to see in the epic the plain narrative, its historical basis, to which the epic itself makes reference. The *Mahābhārata* states that the whole of it has grown in answer to the question put by Janamejaya to Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana at the snake sacrifice about the cause of the discord among those men of unblemished deeds (*akliṣṭa-kāriṇaḥ*), and an account of the great war that brought destruction to so many beings:[25]

Katham samabhavad bhedas teṣām akliṣṭa-kāriṇām,
Tacca yuddham katham vṛttam bhūtāntakaraṇam mahat.

[24] Sukthankar, *Meaning*, p. 23.
[25] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 54. 19 ; (B), I. 60. 19. The Cr. Ed. reads *akliṣṭa-kāriṇām* with a wavy line, which is the reading given by Sukthankar (*Meaning*, p. 33). *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 55. 43a has *akliṣṭa-kāriṇām*.

The *Mahābhārata* is said to be history of these men of unblemished deeds, of their dissention (*bheda*), loss of kingdom (*rājyavināśa*), and victory (*jaya*).[26]

This, as Sukthankar said, is the meaning of the *Mahābhārata* on the mundane plane, that is, with reference to its character as an *itihāsa* (history) which it claims for itself, and to which this obvious interpretation leads. In addition to the main story (*itihāsa*) of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, reference may be made in this connection to several narratives, tales, and legends of the nature of *itihāsa* or *itihāsa-saṁvāda*, which the *Mahābhārata* contains; for *itihāsa* also included narratives, myths, and legends—particularly of famous kings and heroes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MAHABHARATA

The *Mahābhārata* styles itself not only as an *itihāsa, ākhyāna,* and *purāṇa,* but also as *kāvya,* Dharma-śāstra, Artha-śāstra, Kāma-śāstra, Nīti-śāstra, and Mokṣa-śāstra; and its encyclopaedic character envisaged in the following line would make it embrace any number of other characteristics: *Yad ihāsti tad anyatra yad nehāsti na tat kva cit* (whatever is here may be found elsewhere; but what is not here cannot be anywhere else).

The expressions *ākhyāna, itihāsa,* and *purāṇa,* are almost synonymous and were often interchangeable; they ordinarily signified an old tale, legend, or incident; but in some contexts they meant different kinds of narratives. *Ākhyāna* may be broadly taken to cover legends, myths, and episodes in the nature of ballads; *purāṇa* on the other hand meant old legend, old story, especially cosmogonic and cosmological myths; it is only later that the term '*purāṇa*' came to have the sense of a particular class of works. In order to bring out the character of the *Mahābhārata* as *ākhyāna* and *upākhyāna,* reference may be made to the innumerable myths, legends, narratives, and episodes, including those of Śakuntalā, Nala, Damayantī, Rāma, Vidulā, Sāvitrī, and Cyavana. As a *purāṇa,* the *Mahābhārata* gives not only cosmogonic and cosmological myths, but also geographical lists, genealogies, local myths, Viṣṇu and Śiva myths, *manvantaras,* and so on.

Though in his earlier writing aprópos the occurrence of numerous hiatuses in the *Mahābhārata,* Sukthankar stated that the only reference in the epic itself to its being a *kāvya* having disappeared with the Brahmā-Gaṇeśa interpolation in the *Ādiparvan,* we are left only with a *purāṇa, itihāsa,* or *ākhyāna,*[27] yet in his later article he regarded it as 'an inspired poem', and as 'the highest type of Indian *poetry*', on the basis of the same

[26] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 55. 43; (B), I. 61. 53.
[27] *ABORI,* XVI, p. 99; *SME,* I, p. 253.

interpolated line with the prefatory remark: 'It was actually regarded by later generations as a *kāvya*'.[28] At any rate, the character of the *Mahābhārata* as *kāvya* is indisputable. Just as references to the *Mahābhārata* as *kāvya* have been found to be interpolations, so also are those styling it as a *śāstra* of *dharma, artha,* and *kāma,* are also proved to be very late additions.[29] These accretions do not, however, alter the total character of the *Mahābhārata,* because in its final form it combines in itself the characteristics of several Śāstras, including those of *nīti, mokṣa, dharma, artha,* and *kāma.*[30] The *Mahābhārata* is indeed a Dharma-śāstra *par excellence,* presenting, as it does, systematic law and general morality. *Dharma* represents not only the foundation on which the whole stately edifice of the *Mahābhārata* has been erected, but also, to a great extent, its material. The character of the *Mahābhārata* as a Dharma-śāstra, or Smṛti, will be evident from the three main divisions of the Smṛtis, as seen in the discourses on *varṇāśrama-dharma,* or *ācāra, śrāddha, dāyabhāga,* or *vyvahāra, prāyaścitta,* and the rest.

The exposition of *dharma* in its wider concept is given in the *Śānti-* and *Anusaśāna- parvans* comprising (1) *rāja-dharma* (the duties of the king, the king being the recognized head of the governmental machinery which regulates the socio-political structure); (2) *āpad-dharma* (conduct in times of calamity—applicable, especially, to the first two *varṇas* of the Indian society—when the ordinary modes of life and conduct are not possible); (3) *mokṣa-dharma* (emancipation from liability to rebirth, which is the highest goal of human existence); and (4) *dāna-dharma* (liberality). This is, in fact, the material that has come from the Bhārgava mould. These two *parvans* contain the words of truth, 'fraught with *dharma* and *artha*' coming from the mouth of Bhīṣma to the princes assembled 'to listen to words on duty, on morality'.[31]

The domain of the Artha-śāstra is covered by the discourses on *rāja-dharma,* or the theory and practice of government and statecraft, in its different aspects—kingship, republics, ministers, administrative organization, treasury, taxation, fourfold policy, army, inter-State and foreign relations, etc. The didactic episodes and ethical instructions, the rules of conduct and morality, and practical wisdom, preached in the *Mahābhārata* for guiding people not to forsake the right path, pertain to the sphere of Nīti-śāstra. The philosophical tracts in the great epic including the *Bhagavad-Gītā, Sanatsujātīya, Anu-Gītā,* etc. show the path leading to *mokṣa,* investing the *Mahābhārata* with the character of a Mokṣa-śāstra.

[28] *ABORI,* XVIII, p. 72; *SME,* I, p. 334.
[29] *Mbh.* (B), I. 2. 283; (Cr. Ed.), 186*, p. 61.
[30] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 1. 47-48; (B), I. 1. 49-50.
[31] Cf. Sukthankar, *Meaning,* p. 86.

These make the *Mahābhārata* a manual of *bhakti, karma,* and *jñāna,* of Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta, of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Śāktism.

Besides the above characteristics, the *Mahābhārata* represents the synthesis of different religious and philosophical systems. Its value for the reconstruction of the cultural life of the people of ancient India cannot be overestimated. It has given both material and inspiration to poets, artists, and lawgivers ; it has proved itself to be a source of joy and a means of moral instruction ; and it has afforded solace in times of stress and strain to the common man. Truly has it been said that Vyāsa has touched every subject under the sun (*Vyāsocchiṣṭam jagat sarvam*). It is again said that the *Mahābhārata* outweighs the four Vedas, and is the fifth, a new Veda for all people, irrespective of caste, creed, and sex, as distinguished from the other four Vedas, which closed their doors to women and the Śūdras. The appellation '*Mahābhārata*' is said to have been conferred on it on account of its superiority over other works both in substance (*mahattva*) and gravity (*bhāravattva*), or its Indianness (*bhāratatva*).[32]

THE MAHABHARATA: ITS INNER MEANINGS

Let us now turn to the meaning of the *Mahābhārata.* Hitherto, only the plain, *prima facie,* meaning has been dealt with. 'All great works of Indian art and literature', as aptly put by Sukthankar, '. . . are . . . infused with the idea of penetrating behind the phenomena to the core of things, and they represent but so many pulsating reflexes of one and the same central impulse towards seeing unity in diversity, towards achieving one gigantic all-embracing synthesis'.[33] They have thus an inner and deeper meaning. That the *Mahābhārata* has different meanings did not escape the observation of its traditional interpreters. For instance, in explaining the stanza referring to the three beginnings of the *Mahābhārata,* Madhvācārya, in his *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya,* states: The meaning of the 'Bhārata,' in so far as it is a relation of the facts and events with which Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas are connected, is called *āstīkādi* (historical). That interpretation by which we find lessons on virtue, divine love, and other ten qualities, on sacred study and righteous practices, on character and training, on Brahmā and the other gods, is called *manvādi* (religious and moral). Thirdly, the interpretation by which every sentence, word, or syllable, is shown to be the significant name, or to be the declaration of the glories, of the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, is called *auparicara* (transcendental).[34]

[32] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), I. 1. 209 ; (B), I. 1. 274.
[33] Sukthankar, *Meaning,* p. 109.
[34] Subba Rao, *Preface to the Mahābhārata,* p. 24.

THE MAHABHARATA ON THE ETHICAL PLANE

The four lectures delivered by Dr. S. V. Sukthankar in 1942 'On the Meaning of the *Mahābhārata*'[35] exhaustively discusses the three-dimensional view of the *Mahābhārata*—the story of the epic on the mundane, the ethical, and the metaphysical planes. On the mundane plane, the story deals with the realistic account of a fierce fratricidal war of annihilation with its interest centred on the epic characters. The meaning on the ethical plane views the war as a Conflict between the principles of *dharma* and *adharma*, between good and evil, between justice and injustice, in which the contending parties are regarded as incarnations of Devas and Asuras, and the war ends in the victory of *dharma*. The projection of the story into a cosmic background shows the Bhārata war 'as a mere phase in cosmic evolution'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was indeed the incarnation of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. Just as the five Pāṇḍava brothers—Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva—were the incarnations of Dharma, Vāyu, Indra, and the Aśvins respectively, the Kauravas were the incarnations of *asuras, daityas, dānavas,* and *rākṣasas*. Thus, for instance, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was an incarnation of Haṁsa, son of Ariṣṭa, and Duryodhana and his brothers were the Pulastya demons; Duryoadhana and Śakuni were respectively Kali and Dvāpara. On the ethico-psychological plane, 'the epic aims at impressing upon the reader, or rather the listener, the paramountcy of moral values'.[36]

THE MAHABHARATA: ON THE TRANSCENDENTAL PLANE

On the transcendental plane, which takes us beyond *dharma* and *adharma*, the war is fought not only in the Kurukṣetra but also in our own minds; this perpetual battle between the higher self and the lower self of man for establishing mastery over the body is symbolized by the fight between the cousins for sovereignty. Here we are face to face with the deep mysteries of life. The superman (Arjuna) under the guidance of the Super-self (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) emerges successful in this conflict, after he has destroyed with the sword of knowledge ignorance embodied in his illegitimate desires and passions symbolized by his relatives, teachers, elders, and friends ranged on the other side. In this interpretation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Paramātman (Super-self), and Arjuna, the Jīvātman (the individual self). Dhṛtarāṣṭra is a symbol of the vacillating ego-centric self, while his sons 'symbolize in their aggregate the brood of ego-centric desires and passions'. Vidura stands for 'Buddhi, the one-pointed reason', and Bhīṣma is 'tradition, the time-bound element in human life and society'.

Though symbolism cannot be applied to all the particulars, and the

[35] Published by the Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1957.
[36] Sukthankar, *Meaning*, p. 90.

harmonization of all the doctrines of the epic both in ethics and in philosophy is not possible, yet there is no doubt that this metaphysical interpretation leads us to the deeper meaning of the *Mahābhārata*. It shows how the epic poets 'are using every means in their power to expound, illustrate, and popularize, what we might for short call, the Philosophy of the Self, a lofty philosophy of ethical autonomy, unparalleled for its boldness and comprehensiveness, and to convey their message of moral duty and hope, with emphasis on the application of these principles to the problems of daily life'.[37]

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

5

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: SOME ASPECTS OF ITS CULTURE

NEXT to the *Ṛg-Veda Saṁhitā*, the *Mahābhārata* is, perhaps, the most remarkable work in Sanskrit literature. It is the biggest of the world's epics. Since the commencement of the sixth century A.D., it is known to have consisted of 100,000 verses, that is, about eight times the size of the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey* put together. The heroes of this great poem find prominent mention in the works of grammarians, theologians, political thinkers, poets, and dramatists, almost uninterruptedly, from about the fifth century B.C. Precepts culled from it are quoted by a Greek envoy as early as the second century B.C., while the prowess of its principal heroes is mentioned with admiration by royal personages in the Deccan already in the second century A.D. The whole poem is known to have been recited in temples in far-off Cambodia as early as the sixth century A.D. In the next century, we find the Turks of Mongolia reading in their own idiom thrilling episodes like the *Hiḍimbavadha*. The work was translated into their own vernacular by the people of Java before the end of the eleventh century A.D.

The *Mahābhārata* represents a whole literature rather than a single homogeneous work; it constitutes a veritable treasure-house of Indian lore, both secular and religious; and no other single work gives an insight into the innermost depths of the soul of the people as it does. It is a 'Song of Victory', commemorating the deeds of heroism in a war fought to avenge insults to womanhood, and to maintain the just rights of a dynasty that extended the heritage of Bharata and knit together the North, East, West, and South of India into one empire. It is a *purāṇa-saṁhitā* (collection of old tales) containing diverse stories of seers and sages, of beautiful maids and dutiful wives, of valiant warriors and of saintly kings. It is also a magnificent poem describing in inimitable language the fury of the battle field, the stillness of the forest hermitage, the majesty of the roaring sea dancing with billows and laughing with foam, the just indignation of the true daughter of a warrior line, and the lament of the aged mother of dead heroes. It is an authoritative book of law, morality, and social and political philosophy, laying down rules for the attainment of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, called *trivarga*, and also showing the way to liberation expounding the highest religious philosophy of India, and inculcating reverence not only for Nārāyaṇa, the supreme Spirit, Sarasvatī, from whom flow all learning and the arts, and Nara, the superman, the

ideal fighter and seer and the close associate of God, but also for mankind in general. It is declared in the *Śāntiparvan*, 'This is the holy mystery; there is nothing nobler than humanity'.[1]

ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY

Regarding the origin and antiquity of the epic, our information is surprisingly meagre. It professes to be a composition of the holy sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, and is said to have been completed in three years. But there is evidence to show that it has been added to from time to time, that it has passed through several stages of development, and that it has attained to its present bulk by a slow and gradual process. For the beginnings of epic poetry we must turn to the Vedic texts—the *ākhyānas* and *itihāsas* embedded in the Brāhmaṇas and allied literature, and often recited at great sacrifices like the *rājasūya* and the *aśvamedha*, as well as the hero-lauds sung in praise of mighty princes and warriors to the accompaniment of a musical instrument which in the *Mahābhārata* itself is called *sapta-tantrī vīṇā*, seven-stringed lute or lyre.[2] Of the stories, songs, and lauds referred to above, not a few proclaimed the sanctity of Kurukṣetra, the intrepidity of the 'inviolate Arjuna', and the glory and fame of Bharata, of Pratīpa, of Śaṁtanu, of Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vaicitravīrya, of Parīkṣit, of Janamejaya, and others of the Bharata or Kuru race, and spoke of the feuds between the Kurus and the Sṛñjayas and the calamity that overtook the former. It is such legends and lays that formed the nucleus of an epic that assumed coherent shape sometime before Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini. Originally a heroic poem, or 'Song of Victory', known by the names of 'Bhārata'[3] and 'Bhāratī Kathā',[4] the tale of the Bharata race or of the Bhārata war, singing the victory of the Pāṇḍavas led by Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, later identified with Nara and Nārāyaṇa, it was handled by successive generations of *sūtas*, or bards, devoted to the Bhagavat and well versed in Purāṇic lore, of Brāhmaṇas who recited charming tales, and of ascetics living in the woods at Takṣaśilā, Naimiṣāraṇya, and other places, who transformed it into a vast storehouse of old lays and ballads as well as of precepts on law, polity, morality, and religion. On the one hand, it grew into a Holy Writ of the Bhāgavatas—a *Kārṣṇa-Veda*, as it is called in the *Ādi-* and *Svargārohaṇa-parvans*—written by the Sage Kṛṣṇa, which taught *bhakti* for Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and incorporated the 'Song of the Lord'; on the other hand, it summed up Brāhmaṇism and all that it stood for and became a veritable encyclopaedia which 'forgot nothing and absorbed everything', in which we find, side by side, martial songs giving highly coloured pictures of battle-

[1] *Mbh.*, XII. 299. 20. [2] *Ibid.*, III. 134. 14. [3] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 5. 49.
[4] *Ibid.*, I. 61. 3.

fields where the twang of the warrior's bow resembles the rumbling of rain-clouds and the shriek of troops sounds like the roar of the tempest-tossed ocean, lovely idylls depicting forest scenes and celebrating the victory of love and constancy over destiny and death, scholastic discourses on religion, philosophy, and sociology intermingled with 'mild ascetic poetry of edifying wisdom and overflowing love towards man and beast'.

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE EPIC

When the epic began, the centre of Aryan civilization was in the valleys of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, where rose the flourishing kingdoms of the Kurus, the Pañcālas, the Śālvas, and the Matsyas, and the powerful confederacy of the Yādavas of Mathurā. Large tracts even in this region were then covered with forests, some of which, notably the Khāṇḍava-vana, the Kāmyaka-vana, and the Dvaita-vana, are prominently mentioned in the epic. Through these regions glided sacred streams like the Sarasvatī, the Dṛṣadvatī, and the Mālinī, the banks of which were dotted with serene hermitages of seers and sages, 'echoing with the sweet songs of birds and clad with flowery attire of many colours'; and the smiling plains in the neighbourhood were washed by the Yamunā and the Gaṅgā, the waters of which reflected the splendours of the stately capitals of the warrior clans. Before the epic was complete the Aryan civilization had spread over the whole of the vast sub-continent named after the illustrious Bharata and stretching from Badarī, hallowed by the hermitage of Nara-Nārāyaṇa,[5] in the North to Kumārī in the land of the Pāṇḍyas[6] in the extreme South and from Dvārāvatī nestling under the shelter of Mount Ujjayanta[7] in the West to Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmākhyā[8] beyond the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra,[9] in the East. The centre of political gravity was in the western part of the Madhyadeśa, or the Upper Gaṅgā valley, though Magadha (South Bihar) was clearly laying the foundation of its future greatness. But the name of Pāṭaliputra was not yet heard of, and the sturdy warriors of South Bihar were still content with their old hill fortress of Girivraja. The people of the holy land watered by the Sarasvatī and the Yamunā looked askance at the new type of imperialism that had been evolved on the banks of the Śoṇ and had resulted in the imprisonment of hundreds of princes who were kept for slaughter in the fastness of Girivraja 'as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion'. The statesmen of the Madhyadeśa devised a new scheme of conquest which secured the release of these princes and the unification of Bhāratavarṣa under a just and virtuous emperor (*dharma-rāja*) who performed Vedic sacrifices and demanded from his lieges

[5] *Ibid.*, III. 156. 10.
[6] *Ibid.*, III. 88. 14
[7] *Ibid.*, III. 88. 24.
[8] *Ibid.*, III. 82. 105.
[9] *Ibid.*, III. 85. 2.

'only agreeable services—homage or tribute'[10] and had no desire to offer them as victims in a horrid rite.

THE KING AND THE SUBJECTS

The great kings of the epic were usually a monarch who could boast of an illustrious pedigree and a claim to rule by hereditary right.[11] But elective monarchies were not unknown, and in the *Puruvaṁśānukīrtana* section of the *Ādiparvan* we have a reference to a ruler whom 'all the people elected to the kingship, saying that he was a virtuous man'. In several passages mention is also made of kingless people, of corporations (*gaṇas*) that were autonomous, and of warrior clans having a titular king but actually governed by elders styled *saṅgha-mukhyas*.[12]

The head of the State in the epic was no autocrat. He carried on the affairs of his realm with the assistance of a *sabhā*, which was either an assembly of all the warriors of the clan,[13] or a council of elders consisting of the members of the royal family, generals, subordinate allies, and other military chiefs.[14] The circle of advisers and councillors was sometimes enlarged by the admission of priests and even representatives of the lower orders of the people, as the following extracts from the *Śāntiparvan* seem to indicate: 'I shall tell you (the king) what kinds of ministers should be appointed by you. Four Brāhmaṇas learned in the Vedas and ready-witted, who have completed the period of study and discipline, and are of pure conduct, and eight Kṣatriyas, all of whom should have physical strength and be capable of wielding weapons, and one and twenty Vaiśyas, all of whom should be rich, and three Śūdras, every one of whom should be humble and of pure conduct and devoted to daily duties and one man of the *sūta* caste, possessing the knowledge of the Purāṇas and the eight principal virtues, should be your ministers.'[15]

The royal advisers in the epic did not hesitate to upbraid or reprove the king when he went wrong. The king had also to defer to the wishes of the Brāhmaṇas, the *śreṇī-mukhyas*—elders of corporations—and the people whose opinion could not always be ignored.[16] The connection between the king and his people was based on a theory of mutual advantage. The king was to protect the people and do what was pleasing to them[17] in return for the taxes that he received. For the efficient discharge of his duties he had to learn the Veda and the Śāstras[18] and practise self-control.[19]

For the purposes of self-defence and the defeat of his enemies the king

[10] *Ibid.*, II. 33. 6.
[11] *Ibid.*, III. 78. 9.
[12] Cf. *Ibid.*, II. 27. 16; XII. 81. 25, 107. 25.
[13] *Ibid.*, I. 220. 9-10.
[14] *Ibid.*, V. 47. 10.
[15] *Ibid.*, XII. 85. 6-11.
[16] *Ibid.*, III. 249. 16; 107. 40-45.
[17] *Ibid.*, XII. 59. 125.
[18] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 124.
[19] *Ibid.*, V. 129. 34.

had to maintain a standing army with a *senā-pati* at its head. The army was subdivided into regiments and battalions. The fighting forces consisted not only of chariots, elephants, horses, and infantry, but also, according to some passages of the *Śāntiparvan*, of a navy, labourers, spies, and local guides.[20] Standards and flags were used significantly in the battles. Among weapons, the most interesting are the *yantra* (machine) and the *śataghnī* (hundred-killer), which were often used as projectiles.[21] The laws of war were humane, though they were not always observed in practice when feelings ran high. The army seems to have been recruited from all castes, though the Kṣatriyas naturally formed the predominant element. We have references not only to Brāhmaṇa generals but also to Vaiśya and Śūdra warriors, along with those belonging to the Kṣatriya caste; for 'the great battle destructive of life, body, and sins, brought on religious merit, heaven, and fame for all the Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra heroes that engaged in it'.[22]

Though the four primary castes and the mixed castes were known, social divisions had not yet become as rigid as in later times. We have, indeed, in a passage of the *Śāntiparvan*, the bold statement that there is no distinction of castes, and that the whole of this universe is divine, having emanated from Brahman; created (equally) by the supreme Spirit, men had, on account of their *karma* (deed or profession), been divided into various castes.[23]

In the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* the Bhagavat Himself says that He created the four *varṇas* or castes 'having regard to the distribution of qualities and works'. The qualities required in a member of the highest caste are thus described in the *Pativratopākhyāna* of the *Vanaparvan*: 'Wrath is the enemy of persons residing in their (own) body. One who forsakes wrath and infatuation—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa. A person who speaks the truth and pleases his elders, and though himself injured, never injures another—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa; who has his senses under control, who is virtuous, devoted to studies, and pure, and who knows how to restrain lust and anger—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa. The high-minded man who loves all people as his own self, knows what is right, and applies himself to all righteous acts—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa. A man who is devoted to studies and teaches others, who performs sacrifices and officiates at sacrifices performed by others, and who gives away (in charity) according to his means—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa. The foremost of the twice-born, who is a student of the Vedas practising continence, who is generous, sober, and attends to his studies—him the gods consider as a Brāhmaṇa.[24]

[20] *Ibid.*, XII. 59. 41.
[21] *Ibid.*, III. 284. 30-31.
[22] *Ibid.*, VIII. 47. 18-19.
[23] *Ibid.*, XII. 188. 10.
[24] *Ibid.*, III. 206. 32-38.

WOMEN'S POSITION

Women were accorded a place of honour in the epic society and were allowed a considerable amount of freedom in the early period. The misogynists of the age no doubt spoke of girls as a torment[25] and women as the root of all evil;[26] but the better minds had nothing but veneration for the fair sex. 'Women shall always be honoured, for when they are honoured the deities rejoice.'[27] 'Three things do not become impure—women, gems, and water.'[28] 'Women should not be slain.'[29] The noble sentiments about women are reflected in the tales of Sāvitrī, Śakuntalā, Tapatī, Damayantī, and Sītā than whom 'no more tender and delicate types of women are to be found'. Epic heroines received a liberal education in their fathers' houses and some of them developed into well-taught and clever disputants. Draupadī is represented as telling Yudhiṣṭhira how, in the days then long gone by, her father and her brothers received lessons on the *nīti* of Bṛhaspati from an erudite Brāhmaṇa, and she had herself listened to all those learned discourses seated in her father's lap.[30] In the *Udyogaparvan*, a Kṣatriya matron is described as being widely known for her knowledge and learning.[31] In several epic stories, we find Kṣatriya maids choosing their own husbands, and in a famous episode of the *Vanaparvan* a king asks his daughter to choose a husband and says that he will give her to the man of her choice.[32]

The seclusion of women was practised in certain families; but many of the epic tales bear witness to a freer life when women laid aside their veils and came out of their houses, specially at the time of a *svayaṁvara*, on the occasion of a great national festival, or at a time of sorrow. The characteristic traits of the women of the period and the place they occupied in society are clearly brought out in several *upākhyānas*. In the story of Sāvitrī, we have the ideal wife wrestling with the god of death for the life of her husband. The episode of Vidulā bears testimony to the fierce unbending spirit of a true daughter of aristocratic parents who exhorts her indolent son to 'flare up like a torch of ebony wood, though it be but for a moment, but not to smoulder, like a fire of chaff, just to prolong life'.[33]

The place of the wife in domestic economy is best described in the following lines of the *Śakuntalopākhyāna*:

'A wife is half the man, transcends
In value far all other friends.

[25] *Ibid.*, I. 159. 11.
[26] *Ibid.*, XIII. 38. 1 ff.
[27] *Ibid.*, XIII. 46. 5, 9.
[28] *Ibid.*, XII. 165. 32.
[29] *Ibid.*, XII. 135. 14.
[30] *Ibid.*, III. 32. 60-62.
[31] *Ibid.*, V. 138. 3.
[32] *Ibid.*, III. 293. 32-36. The episode is *Sāvitryupākhyāna*.
[33] *Ibid.*, V. 133. 14.

She every earthly blessing brings,
And even redemption from her springs.
In lonely homes, companions bright,
These charming women give delight;
Like fathers wise, in duty tried,
To virtuous acts they prompt and guide.
Whene'er we suffer pain and grief,
Like mothers kind they bring relief'.[34]

THE RELIGION OF THE MAHABHARATA

The religion which the *Mahābhārata* inculcates has a twofold basis, the truth and the Vedas;[35] but its religious ideas are not a mere replica of those prevailing in the Vedic period. Great changes had taken place in the conception of the gods and the problems of life. The old Vedic gods had lost much of their pristine splendour, and the presiding deities of nature became 'quite human in dress, talk, and action'. New deities like Skanda, Vaiśravaṇa, and Maṇibhadra took their place in the pantheon. The deification of heroes proceeded apace; but the whole world of the gods and the demi-gods, sentient beings and inanimate things, was conceived as a 'perpetual process of creation and destruction filling eternity with an everlasting rhythm', and the entire scheme was placed under the law of *karma* which states that every individual shall reap the fruit of deeds he or she performed in previous lives. 'As a calf could recognize its mother among a thousand kine, so the effect of past deeds would not fail to find out the doer.'[36]

The new doctrine that the operation of this law can be modified by the grace (*prasāda*) of God, the Ordainer (Īśvara, Dhātṛ) combined with the loving faith (*bhakti*) of the worshipper was preached, among others, by the Bhāgavatas or Pāñcarātras, who taught *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa identified with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. Their religious and philosophical views are expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the *Viśvopākhyāna*, and several other theistic treatises incorporated into the great epic. Rival sects also make their appearance, the most notable being the Pāśupatas who lay stress on devotion to Śiva-Paśupati and the Sauras devoted to the sun or Sūrya. The growth of these sects threatened to destroy the solidarity of the Aryan community. Separatist tendencies of extreme sectarianism were, however, sought to be checked by the doctrine that Viṣṇu, the God of the Bhāgavatas, is identical with Śiva, the deity of the Pāśupatas (*Śivāya Viṣṇurūpāya*).[37] This compromise prepared the ground for the doctrine

[34] *Ibid.*, I. 74. 41-43. [35] *Ibid.*, III. 206. 41. [36] *Ibid.*, XII. 181. 16.
[37] *Ibid.*, III. 39. 76.

of the Trimūrti, which seeks to unite the gods of the orthodox theologians into a trinity of aspects, or forms and unity in essence. In the form of Brahmā the One God creates, in the form of Puruṣa (Viṣṇu) He preserves, and in the form of Rudra (Śiva) He lulls the universe into eternal sleep.[38] The next step was to identify the great gods such as India, Sūrya, Skanda, Varuṇa, Yama, and Śanaiścara, with the Trimūrti,[39] and regard them as but manifestations of the Primeval Spirit, the Lord (Īśāna) who is adored by all and to whom all make offerings—the true, the one undecaying Brahman, both manifest and unmanifest.

How could one win admittance to the realm of this Primeval Spirit and attain immortality? Not by hundreds of sacrifices but by self-restraint, renunciation, vigilance, and goodwill towards all beings. 'Self-restraint, renunciation, and vigilance—these are the three horses of Brahman. He who rides on the car of his soul, having yoked (these horses) with the help of reins of right behaviour, goes, O king, to the realm of Brahman, shaking off all fear of death. He who assures to all beings freedom from fear goes to the highest of regions, the blessed abode of Viṣṇu. The fruit that a man reaps by granting protection from harm cannot be obtained by thousands of sacrifices or daily fasts.'[40] These sentiments are echoed by a Greek devotee of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, the God of gods, in an epigraphic record of the second century B.C. The new school of saints and seers to whom we owe these and similar ideas, lays stress on *ātma-yajña* (sacrifice in the form of meditation on the Self) in place of the older *paśu-yajña* (sacrifice of animals).

'Death comes from infatuation, and immortality is acquired by truth. Abstaining from injury, shaking off desire and anger, and resorting to the truth with a happy and contented mind, I shall scoff at death like an immortal. Engaged in the sacrifice of peace, possessed of self-control, and devoted also to the sacrifice of Brahman, the sacrifices I shall perform are those of speech, mind, and deed, when the sun enters his northerly course. How can one like me celebrate an animal sacrifice which is full of cruelty? How can one endowed with wisdom perform, like a ghoul, a sacrifice of destruction after the manner of the Kṣatriyas—a sacrifice which brings only transitory rewards? I am born of my own Self, O father, and without progeny I shall seek my own spiritual welfare. I shall offer the sacrifice of the Self, I require no children to be my saviours.'[41] It is interesting to note that it was Ghora Āṅgirasa, the preceptor of Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,[42] who first taught the *puruṣa-yajña*-

[38] *Ibid.*, III. 272. 47.

[39] *Ibid.*, III. 3. 18; XIII. 14. 347-8. Neither the word '*trimūrti*' nor the idea is employed directly in the epic.—S. K. De.

[40] *Mbh.*, XI. 7. 23 ff. [41] *Ibid.*, XII. 277. 30-34. [42] III. 17. 6.

vidyā, in the form of a meditation. This indicates the source of inspiration of the famous poets and sages who sang of the newer morality.

Doubts, however, not only about the value of sacrificial rites, but also about the efficacy of religion and morality and the justice and benevolence of God Himself are expressed now and then. A long-suffering princess complains that a man does not attain prosperity by piety, gentleness, forgiveness, straightforwardness, and other virtues, and expresses her conviction that 'the blessed God, the self-created, the great Grand-sire, with secret action, destroys creatures by creatures, playing with them as a boy with toys. Not like a father or a mother does the Creator behave to his creatures; like ordinary mortals he acts in anger.'[43]

To this the man of religion replies that true piety seeks no reward (*dharmam carāmi suśroṇi na dharma-phala-kāraṇāt*). 'Do not', he adds, 'speak ill of God, who is the Lord of all creatures; learn to know Him; bow to Him; let not your understanding be such. Never disregard that supreme Being, O Kṛṣṇā, through whose mercy the mortals, by pious observances, become immortal.'[44] The Lord Himself says in the *Gītā*: 'All beings I regard alike; not one is hateful to Me or beloved; but those who with loving faith worship Me abide in Me, and I also in them.'[45]

[43] *Ibid.*, III. 30. 36-38. [44] *Ibid.*, III. 31. 4; 41-42 [45] IX. 29.

6

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE EPICS

THE *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are unique documents in the literary history of the world. Especially in the field of religion, mysticism, and philosophy, they have depicted phases ranging from the divine to the mundane, from the transcendental to the empirical view of life. In these two great epics, we find the full and vigorous development of the Hindu mind from its early babblings to the period of philosophical discussions on the serene aspects of human thought; here we get specimens of the songs to Nature in plenty like those of the Vedic bards; here we get also the philosophical moorings for later thinking, in imitation of the Upaniṣads, the *established precepts* of the sages of India. Nature and the *divine unknown* are here brought together, and in between them are encrusted gods and goddesses, *apsarases* (celestial nymphs), *gandharvas* (divine musicians), *nāgas* (serpent demons with human faces), *asuras* (demons), and others. The human mind does not rest merely with these; so we find also here a moral code common to both gods and men, in antipathy to whom the devils and demons are always shown as acting. Thus we have here a separate pantheon, a separate moral code, and a separate treatment of religion, mysticism, and philosophy.

The *Mahābhārata*, being encyclopaedic in its nature, contains whole chapters on religion, mysticism, and philosophy. In the histories of the various peoples of the world, we find that the religio-superstitious aspects are meant for the layman, the mystic elements for the saintly, and the philosophical features for the analytical mind. As the age of the epic oscillates between the date of the Bhārata war and the age reaching almost the precincts of the Christian era, we naturally find in the epic text a spiritual fountain consisting of all sorts of compositions in which all types of readers—the agnostics, the mystics, the philosophers, and others—can possibly quench their thirst. The different systems of philosophy, i.e. the Yoga, the Sāṁkhya, the Vedānta (or, more properly, the Āraṇyaka), and the Lokāyata, and also Brāhmaṇic sacerdotalism, the sects of the Śaiva (especially Pāśupata), Pāñcarātra, Śākta, Saura, Nandidharma, and others, are all described in the epic.

THE EPIC PANTHEON

The age-long epics have eventually imbibed into themselves the Aryan and the non-Aryan or Vrātya[1] elements of mythology, and have

[1] The Vrātyas, some scholars hold, were not non-Aryans, but only non-Vedic Aryans.—ed.

created a sound background for the Hindu religion, which has remained almost the same in the following centuries. To illustrate, the Kṛṣṇa and the Śiva elements found in the *Mahābhārata* are foreign to the early Vedic and Brāhmaṇic periods, and a complete assimilation of the two has been effected in it. From the point of view of mythology, we find that the *Mahābhārata* stands just midway between the Vedic and the later Purāṇic periods. Here it is not only a concern of the gods, but of men and gods acting together, for the welfare of humanity. Even gods and men are shown as fighting against each other. The fight of Arjuna with Śiva in the guise of a Kirāta and the episode of Agasti's cursing Nahuṣa in heaven may elucidate the point. The best of all gods descend upon the earth in times of necessity, and the epic heroes ascend to heaven above at a time of emergency. As men quarrel for supremacy, even so the gods try to usurp supremacy among themselves. Gods marry at times among human beings and beget children mysteriously. The epic gods stand fully anthropomorphized.

Along with the Vedic element, the epics present the three sectarian gods Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, Brahmā, and Rudra-Śiva. The worship of Brahmā as Father-God and as one forming part of the Hindu Trinity is an outcome of the Upaniṣadic period. The authors of the epics exalt the position of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa by incorporating the characters of Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa in the Vedic Viṣṇu, and by Brāhmaṇizing the cult of Kṛṣṇa who was the war-lord of the Ābhīras. In the *Harivaṁśa*—a supposed appendix of the *Mahābhārata*—Kṛṣṇa appears as the supreme Viṣṇu born on the earth. The Vedic gods gradually recede into the background and sectarian gods assume prominence in the epics. Though sectarian feelings of rivalry are depicted in them and the superiority of one god over the others is shown, efforts are also made to proclaim the identity of Viṣṇu and Śiva, or that of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva as constituting the Hindu Trinity.

The eight major gods of the epic pantheon are Sūrya, Soma, Vāyu, Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera, and Indra, who are described also as the guardians of the quarters.[2] Vāyu, Vāta, Māruta, and Anila are the designations of the wind-god, the life of the world.[3] Maruts are mentioned as *vātaskandhas*, while Vāyu-Marut is treated by Indra as his servant.[4] Hanūmat appears as the son, or messenger, of Vāta. Agni, reputed as having burnt the Khāṇḍava forest, assumes a minor role in the sectarian passages of the epic. Son of Viṣṇu, or the All-God Ātman, or a form of Śiva, he burns down the universe at *pralaya* (period of dissolution). His main representative is Skanda, the army chief (*senā-pati*). Yama, the

[2] Manu (V. 96) designates them as *lokapālas*.
[3] *Mbh.*, III. 147. 27.
[4] *Ibid.*, I. 32. 8.

guardian of hell and the bestower of bliss upon the good and woe upon the wicked, carries the soul of the dead to his realm, the Puṣpodaka. In Yama's heaven, there are kings, sinners, and those who die at the solstice. His assembly hall (*sabhā*) is said to have been built by Viśvakarman. The awe of this god of justice, Dharma Vaivasvata, son of the sun, was felt by gods and men alike. His discourse to Naciketas and his dialogue with Sāvitrī figure prominently. Yamas and Dhāmas protect the path to heaven.[5] The *Rāmāyaṇa* refers to Yama-śatru.[6] Varuṇa, the supreme ruler (*samrāj*) of the physical and the moral world as shown in the *Ṛg-Veda*, appears in the epics as a mere 'lord of the west' accompanied by 'male and female' rivers, snakes, demons (*daityas*), half-gods (*sādhyas*), and deities (*devatās*). Described as a dwarf, as one dwelling in the north in Mt. Kailāsa, and as a demonic gate-keeper Macāruka, Kubera (alias Maṇibhadra or Vaiśvānara) is the god of wealth, the jewel-giver, the guardian of travellers, and the king of the *yakṣas*. Indra, the slayer of Namuci and the Brāhmaṇa Vṛtra, is anthropomorphized to a large extent; he is endowed with his old grandeur, and has his own heaven. Called Viṣṇu, Soma, fire, air, time in all its divisions, earth and ocean, the overlord of 'the great cloud and its thunder', and creator and destroyer, Indra, the king of Vasus, could not conquer Tripura. People used to celebrate *Indra-maha* in place of which Kṛṣṇa started his own *Go-maha*. Each world cycle possesses its own Indra.

Ṛbhus are sometimes exalted to the position of the highest gods. Further, there are the *guhyakas*; the demons; the 'physicians of the gods'; the 'first-born'; the golden birds which 'weave the white and black of time', which 'creek the wheel of time with all its seasons, and make the sun and sky'. Viśvāvasu and Citraratha are celebrated among the *gandharvas*, whose lists are varied. *Gāndharva-tattva* (the lore of singing), and *yuddha-gāndharva* (war music) are referred to.[7] Menakā, Sahajanyā, Parṇinī, Puñjaka-sthalā, Ghṛta-sthalā, Ghṛtācī, Viśvācī, Anumlocā, Pramlocā, and Manovatī—these daughters of Pradhā are the most renowned of the *apsarases*. Kāma, or cupid, whose ensign is the Makara, and his arrows are mentioned. Reference is also made to the *sādhyas*, the *vidyādharas*, the twelve Ādityas, the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, and the two Aśvins (or, in their place, Prajāpati and Vaṣaṭkāra).

Identical with the gods in being are the *pitṛs* (manes), who are described also as *pretas*; they, together with *piśācas*, *yātudhānas*, *rākṣasas*, and *pramathas*, are said to worship Prajāpati Brahmā in his paradise.

[5] *Ibid.*, IX. 44. 83.
[6] VI. 44 20 (reading according to Govindarāja).
[7] *Rām.*, I. 4. 10; VI. 54. 24.

They all can assume mortal forms, and are of one being (*ekībhūta*).[8] The stars are fancied to be the souls of the departed. After the *devas* and the *pitṛs* come the divine *ṛṣis*, among whom are Bhṛgu and Agastya, the lord of the South, who is said to have drunk the whole ocean, benumbed the Vindhya, and married Lopāmudrā, the perfect woman.[9]

Under the category of zoolatry may be included: Surabhī (the divine cow) who has a heaven of her own; Hanūmat, the divine monkey, who was the right-hand soldier of Rāma; the elephants (*dig-gajas*) that are the mythological guardians of the quarters; Nandin, the bull-vehicle of Śiva; the Haṁsa (swan); Garuḍa, the eagle mentioned as the vehicle of Sun-Viṣṇu; snakes; demoniac animals like *manuṣya-śālāvṛkas* and *śarabhas*. There is mention of divine rivers—the Gaṅgā, the Yamunā, and others; divine trees comprising *samidh*, *pippala*, *aśvattha*, *śamī*, *śāka*, *udumbara*, *nyagrodha*, *kadamba*, *santānaka*, *pārijāta* (identified with *mandāra* in the *Harivaṁśa*), the mythical *kalpa-vṛkṣa* (tree of life), and the magical and heavenly trees.[10] Among the groves are those of *devadāru* and *kadalīs* on Mt. Gandhamādana and Devāraṇya, Divyavana, and the like. Trees sometimes are associated with gods, for instance, *aśvattha*, *nyagrodha*, and *udumbara* with Viṣṇu, and *pārijāta*, with Kṛṣṇa. The Pracetases marry *vārkṣī*, 'a tree-girl'.

THE THREE GODS OF THE EPIC PANTHEON

Among the gods of the epic pantheon, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, represent respectively the three functions of creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe. Around them and their consorts, from whom have stemmed the cult of Śāktism, gather the religious beliefs and practices of the epic period. The existence of god Brahmā is mainly due to the efforts of the orthodox Brāhmaṇas of the day. The *brahman* (neut.) is turned into Brahmā (masc.) meaning the Father-God, the creator of the universe. Śiva and Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa have a history of their own since protohistoric times up to this day. While Śaivism arose out of the religious notions and beliefs of the non-Aryans and Aryans, Vaiṣṇavism emerged as a combination of many faiths found in the Brāhmaṇical and non-Brāhmaṇical circles. During the epic period, the Brāhmaṇa bards were busy assimilating the lore of the indigenous people of India. Their efforts were crowned with success at the end of the epic period.

The sectarian gods have their own heavens—Brahmaloka of Brahmā, Vaikuṇṭha of Viṣṇu, and Kailāsa of Śiva. The growth of the particular cults gave rise to sectarian rivalry and the habit of representing each god

[8] *Mbh.*, I. 7. 7 ff. [9] *Ibid.*, III. 130. 6. [10] *Ibid.*, I. 219. 3.

as supreme. Evidently, attempts were made in the *Mahābhārata* to smooth down the prevalent sectarian ill-feeling. The scenes of Viśvarūpa and the final section of the Nārāyaṇa-Rudra fight emphasize the unity of Nārāyaṇa and Rudra, which gave rise to the notion of Hari-Hara. Viṣṇu and Brahmā are said to have sprung from the right and left sides of Śiva. At times, one of the Trinity is presented as subordinate to and praising the other, indicating the absence of difference. A concept of Hindu Trinity was formulated to explain the three functions of creation, preservation, and destruction.[11] The three divinities were later identified with the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. These gods may be considered as also occupy the starting points of the different systems of philosophy.

Brahmā: Though occupying a subordinate position in the epic pantheon, he is described as the supreme creator, a passive-active god, holy, eternal, and wise, though not omniscient. He is said to have been sprung from the lotus in the naval of Viṣṇu,[12] or out of the golden egg.[13] He is designated by such epithets as Prajāpati and Pitāmaha, and is called Caturmūrti (having four forms)[14] and Caturmukha (having four faces, implying the four Vedas). The *Mahābhārata* refers to his seven mind-born sons.[15] His paradise is located above that of Indra. He is sometimes lauded as the supreme God. Śiva, who is said to have been born from the forehead of Brahmā, gets a son by prostrations before him; Kṛṣṇa acts at the behest of Brahmā in the case of Jarāsandha.[16] In the *Mahābhārata* Brahmā acts as Śiva's charioteer, and asks Śiva to help Indra.[17] Hopkins's view that the religions of Vṣṇu and Śiva 'are superimposed upon the older worship of Brahmā'[18] is not correct, as the two cults antedated the Brahmā worship.

Viṣṇu: The *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, and other Vedic works show the different stages through which Viṣṇu was attaining eminence. In the *Bhīṣmaparvan* the supreme Spirit is addressed as Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu and is identified with Vāsudeva. The *Anu-Gītā* speaks of the *virāṭ* form shown by Kṛṣṇa to Uttaṅka as the Vaiṣṇava form. The *Mahābhārata* brings about parity between Viṣṇu and Śiva by enumerating the thousand names of both the gods; both lists have taken shape due to mutual influence. The notion of the *avatāras* appears to have just made a beginning in the epic period. Both Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Rāma are identified with Viṣṇu and thus they are gods on the earth. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he takes birth whenever *dharma* is in a sinking condition.[19] The doctrine of the ten *avatāras*, however, seems not to have come into vogue in the epic

[11] *Ibid.*, III. 271. 47.
[12] *Ibid.*, III. 203. 14.
[13] *Ibid.*, XII. 311. 3.
[14] *Ibid.*, III. 203. 15.
[15] *Ibid.*, XII. 166. 15-7.
[16] *Ibid.*, II. 22. 36.
[17] *Ibid.*, VIII. 33. 46 ff.
[18] *Religions of India*, p. 389.
[19] IV. 7.

period. It is only in the interpolated sections of the *Mahābhārata* that the ten incarnations are enumerated.[20]

Nārāyaṇa: The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka,* for the first time, speaks of Nārāyaṇa as the supreme Being endowed with all Upaniṣadic attributes. The *Mahābhārata* identifies Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Nārāyaṇa, whose abode is located in the Śvetadvīpa. He is called Nārāyaṇa, because his resting place (*ayana*) is the waters (*nāra = āpaḥ*).[21] Possibly, Nārāyaṇa is of Dravidian origin, the serpent god of the proto-Indians, having waters as his resting place. Here in Nārāyaṇa, then, appears to be the polarization of the fierce, destructive element of the serpent, and the lotus which is the symbol of fertility, and from which Brahmā (the Creator) is said to have sprung. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the fight between Rudra and Nārāyaṇa.

Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa: From the *Taittīriya Āraṇyaka*[22] it would appear that Vāsudeva was the name of a divinity before the period of the *Mahābhārata.* He is called Sātvata, Sātyaki, and Janārdana, in the *Mahābhārata.*[23] Bhīṣma calls Vāsudeva 'the eternal god, mysterious, beneficent, and loving', whom 'the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras worship by their devoted actions'.[24] The *Bhagavad-Gītā* describes Vāsudeva 'to be all', and Śrī Kṛṣṇa states: 'Among Vṛṣṇis I am Vāsudeva'.[25] The problem of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa has been dealt with by various scholars, by propounding several theories, and none of them has commanded general acceptance. The name Kṛṣṇa occurs as the composer of a hymn of the *Ṛg-Veda,*[26] and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* speaks of Devakī-putra Kṛṣṇa as a pupil of Ghora Āṅgirasa.[27] The early struggle between Indra and Kṛṣṇa, indicated in the *Ṛg-Veda,*[28] is continued to be remembered in the epic by Kṛṣṇa's advocacy of the worship of the mountain, in place of the performance of *Indra-mahotsava.* Kṛṣṇa appears in the *Mahābhārata* (1) as an ordinary human being, a friend of Arjuna, and counsellor of the Pāṇḍavas ; (2) as a semi-divine being ; and (3) the supreme Being. Dr. Sukthankar has expressed the view that there is absolutely no direct and positive evidence to support the theory that originally Kṛṣṇa was some kind of god who was subsequently transformed by the epic poets into a man.[29] The *Harivaṁśa* and the Purāṇas refer succinctly to the cowherd boy, Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī, and the slayer of Kaṁsa. Kṛṣṇa is described in the above works as the Vṛṣṇi prince of Dvārakā, and as one closely associated with Arjuna. The personality of the supreme Kṛṣṇa appears to have resulted from the fusion of the Brāhmaṇic tradition of Brahmā, Viṣṇu,

[20] *Mbh.*, XII. 349. 103-4 ; (K), 348. 2.
[21] Cf. *Mbh.*, III. 192. 3-4.
[22] X. 16.
[23] I. 218. 12 ; V. 70. 5-7.
[24] *Mbh.*, VI. 66. 33-41.
[25] VII. 19 ; X. 37.
[26] VIII. 85.
[27] III. 17. 6.
[28] VIII. 96. 13-5.
[29] *Meaning*, p. 67.

and others, and the Vrātya tradition which added its doctrine of monotheism and Nārāyaṇa.

Śiva-Rudra: In the *Mahābhārata*, we recognize three different strata presenting the characteristics of Śiva: first, the older traditions, secondly, the amalgamation of the Vrātya Śiva and the Aryan Rudra, and thirdly, the accretion of new materials. To the first period may be referred the expressions *mahā-yogīśvara, mahā-śepa nagna,*[30] *ūrdhva-liṅga,*[31] *dig-vāsas,*[32] and *ūrdhva-retas,*[33] which indicate the early Yogic and nude representations of Śiva familiar to the Mohenjodaro period. The close association of the Nāga tribe with Śiva is suggested by the mention of the seven-hooded serpent with reference to Śiva.[34] The references to the fierce and malevolent Rudra, the *kṛtti-vāsas,*[35] the *makhaghna*, the destroyer of Pūṣan's teeth,[36] and also the *śatarudrīya* and the *rudra-homa*, as well as to the Mūjavat mountain, the residence of Śiva and Pārvatī, are all related to the second, namely, the Vedic and Brāhmaṇic, period. The mention of Śiva as *kuru-kartā* (Kuru-maker), *kuru-vāsī* (dweller among Kurus),[37] and as giver of a boon to Mārkaṇḍeya and the weapon known as *pāśupatāstra* to Arjuna seems to have some historical bearing. To the third period belong the accounts of Nīlakaṇṭha, or Śitikaṇṭha; *amṛta-mathana*; Śiva's birth; his bearing the crescent; his association with Nandin and Gaṅgā; the episodes of Dakṣa, Andhaka, Tripura; and the version of the eleven Rudras.[38] Like Viṣṇu, Śiva also is described as the supreme Being, the All-in-all, the omniscient Ruler of the universe, though his principal role is as that of its destroyer.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Śiva designated Śaṅkara and Rudra appears as a god of the North, but he is not regarded as higher than the *devas*.[39] Rāvaṇa overthrows Śaṅkara,[40] who, in his role as Hara, is described as the destroyer of the universe at the end of the *yuga*. Hara (Śiva) is said to have drunk poison at the instance of Hari.[41] Śiva is called Maheśvara, and has a wonder-tree on Himavat,[42] where Kubera became yellow-eyed by seeing him. He is also called Mahādeva, Śambhu possessed of eleven epithets[43] (probably the Rudras), Tryambaka,[44] Amareśa, lord of *bhūtas*, smiter of Tripura, burner of Kāma,[45] father of Skanda,[46] drinker of world-destroying poison, destroyer of Dakṣa's sacrifice,[47] receiver of the falling Gaṅgā,[48] carrier of the rosary,

[30] *Mbh.* (K), XIII. 45. 214 ff.
[31] *Mbh.*, XIII. 17. 46.
[32] *Ibid.*, XIII. 14. 217; 17. 42.
[33] *Ibid.*, XIII. 14. 217; 17. 46.
[34] *Ibid.*, XIII. 14. 257.
[35] *Ibid.*, X. 7. 6.
[36] *Ibid.*, X. 8. 16; XII. 284. 48.
[37] *Ibid.*, XIII. 17. 107.
[38] *Mbh.* (K), XIII. 255. 12-3: Aja-Ekapād, Ahirbudhnya, Pinākin, Aparājita, Ṛta, Pitṛrūpa, Tryambaka, Vṛṣākapi, Śambhu, Havana, and Īśvara.
[39] *Rām.*, VI. 59. 128.
[40] *Ibid.*, VI. 111. 49.
[41] *Ibid.*, I. 45. 22-6.
[42] *Ibid.*, IV. 37. 27.
[43] *Ibid.*, IV. 43. 55.
[44] *Ibid.*, VI. 43. 6.
[45] *Ibid.*, I. 23. 13.
[46] *Ibid.*, I. 36. 7 ff.
[47] *Ibid.*, I. 66. 9 ff.
[48] *Ibid.*, I. 43. 15 ff.

etc. In the interpolated *Uttarakāṇḍa* Śiva is more exalted and put under Viṣṇu.[49]

The institution of gods and goddesses had come into full vogue by the time of the final redaction of the *Mahābhārata*. The names of the consorts of the different gods have been enumerated in the *Udyogaparvan*:[50] Ravi = Prabhāvatī; Vahni = Svāhā; Candra = Rohiṇī; Yama = Dhūmorṇā; Varuṇa = Gaurī; Dhaneśvara = Ṛddhi; Nārāyaṇa = Lakṣmī; Udadhi = Jāhnavī; Rudra = Rudrāṇī; and Pitāmaha = Vedī. More names like Hrī, Śrī (fame, glory, prosperity), Umā, Lakṣmī, and Sarasvatī, also occur in this epic. There are clear traces of the worship of the Mother Goddess in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Harivaṁśa* calls her *nagnā* (naked), reminiscent of the nude representations of this Mother Goddess. Rukmiṇī, at the time of her marriage, is said to have first worshipped Durgā. Arjuna's prayer to Durgā in the *Bhīṣmaparvan* and the prayer of Yudhiṣṭhira to her found in the *Virāṭaparvan*[51] are very late interpolations; they refer to various new names and characteristics of the goddess. The description of Kālī, the fierce goddess, occurs in the account of Aśvatthāman's nocturnal raid of the Pāṇḍava camp.[52]

The *Mahābhārata* also contains expressions like *bhagaliṅgā*, *māheśvarī prajā*,[53] *mātṛkā*, *bhagadevā*, etc. In the *Sabhāparvan*, a demoness Jarā, called the *gṛha-devatā* (tutelary deity), is stated to have been installed in every house to ward off the demons.[54] Much more interesting is the description of the horrible demoness in the country of the Vāhīkas, worshipped in Śākalapura, the capital of the Madras, who is said to sing the following song on the fourteenth night of the dark fortnight: 'Oh, when shall I have the pleasure again of singing the songs of the Vāhīkas! When shall I have a sumptuous feast of beef, pork, camel, and ass flesh, as well as of rams and cocks with Gauḍīya wine to boot, in the company of the stout and fair Śākala women! Unlucky, indeed, is he who eats no such dainties.'[55] The custom indicated by the flesh and the Gauḍīya wine may have given rise to the *pañca-makāra* rites of later Śāktism.

Kārttikeya and other Gods: The epics describe Kārttikeya as the son of Agni and Ākāśagaṅgā, or of Agni and Svāhā, and his marriage to Devasenā.[56] He is also spoken of as the son of Durgā and Śiva,—all the three together form the early triad. Kārttikeya was responsible for the destruction of Tārakāsura. Nandin and Śiva-gaṇas are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, which associates the *liṅga* with Śiva, and gives details of the mode

[49] *Ibid.*, VII. 6.
[50] 115. 8 ff.
[51] *Durgā-stotra*, *Mbh.*, IV. 6; VI. 23.
[52] *Mbh.*, X. 8. 76-8.
[53] *Ibid.*, XIII. 14. 233.
[54] 18. 1 ff.
[55] *Mbh.*, VIII. 44. 25-6.
[56] *Rām.*, I. 37; *Mbh.*, III. 228-9; *Mbh.* (K), XIII. 130 ff.

of *liṅga* worship.[57] As for Gaṇapati, Winternitz and some other scholars doubt his existence in the epic pantheon.

TEMPLES AND RITUALS

The epics contain expressions like *devāyatana*, *caitya*, and *caityavṛkṣa*, and also *ālaya* of *Nāgas*.[58] When Rāma was visiting Agastya's *āśrama*, he is said to have come across shrines dedicated to eighteen gods.[59] Temples were found empty at Daśaratha's death.[60] Yudhiṣṭhira, in his journey, came across a sacred grove containing altars of saints and the various gods. A painted image of the demoness Jarā was worshipped with perfumes, flowers, incense, and food. Holy trees were also worshipped.

The epics describe various forms of ritual: the *rājasūya*, the *vājapeya*, the *soma* (the creeper replaced by the Pūlikā plant),[61] and the monthly and seasonal sacrifices. The *Bhīṣmaparvan* refers to the *sātvata* rites. *Indra-maha*, *Brahma-maha*,[62] *samāja* in honour of Śiva,[63] *sattra* to Viṣṇu, *svasti-vācana*, and tales of fire-cult, appear to have attained popularity. The system of *Satī* appears to have been prevalent. Among other rites and superstitions, which the epics mention, there are covenants of blood, of death, of water ; love-fillets, magic drugs ; ordeals of fire, water ; and so on.

PHILOSOPHY AND MYSTICISM

As in the case of the pantheon, in matters of philosophy and mysticism also, the *Mahābhārata* tried to Brāhmaṇize the non-Aryan lore. It has presented to us almost the entire treasure-house of beliefs and practices that were in vogue at the time. Vedānta is called the Ekāntin's religion. Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra, and Vedāraṇyaka, are described as the four varieties of knowledge.[64] It is pointed out that Kapila declared the Sāṁkhya, and Hiraṇyagarbha the Yoga. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva are stated to be the lords of *yoga*. The *Anu-Gītā*[65] refers to various doctrines current among the people and problems such as permanence and impermanence of piety and its various forms ; existence or non-existence, unity or diversity, of the permanent principle ; relation between Brahman and truth, and time and space. The *Śāntiparvan* refers to the preference some have for *mokṣa-mārga*, and others, for *yajña-mārga* ; and also to *rāja-dharma*, *ahiṁsā*, *uñcha-vrata*, and *Veda-vrata*.[66] Though Yoga, Bhāgavata, and other systems, accept the Sāṁkhya doctrine with slight variations, the vein of mysticism is common to all.

[57] XIII. 161.
[58] *Ibid.*, II. 71. 39.
[59] *Ibid.*, I. 143. 3.
[60] 354. 10 ff.
[60] *Rām.*, VII. 37. 13 ff.
[61] *Mbh.*, III. 35. 33.
[62] *Ibid.*, XII. 349. 1.
[63] *Ibid.*, III. 12. 17-21.
[64] *Ibid.*, I. 164. 20.
[65] *Ibid.*, XIV. 16-51.

As regards the means of knowledge, the *Mahābhārata* accepts the authority of the Vedic scriptures (Āgama), perception, and inference, as valid, Four canons of Nyāya are described.[67] Dialecticians, unbelievers, doubters, critics of the Vedas, haters of Brāhmaṇas, and devotees of mere logic and reasoning, are all denounced throughout.[68] Reference is made to the Purāṇas and the Itihāsas,[69] as well as the 'deceitfulness of the Veda'.[70]

SECTS

The *Mahābhārata* describes various religious and philosophical sects, The Pāśupata sect is said to have been proclaimed by Śiva himself. Though blamed by the unintelligent on account of its being occasionally opposed to the rules of the Śāstra and the *varṇāśrama* (castes and orders), it is, nevertheless, referred to as a system appreciated by those of perfect wisdom whose path is asserted to be really superior to the orders (*atyāśrama*).[71] A detailed account is given of the mode of the worship of the *liṅga* and the *pāśupata-vrata.*[72] Aumas, Māheśvaras, Nandidharmas, Kaumāras, and the rest, are added in the Kumbhakonam edition of the *Mahābhārata.*[73] In the epithet *pañca-mahākalpa*, applied to Viṣṇu, the epic commentator sees reference to the Āgamas (scriptures) of the Sauras, the Śāktas, the Gāṇeśas, the Śaivas, and the Vaiṣṇavas.[74] With the exception of the Gāṇeśas, the other sects are to be found in the text. According to Hopkins, the Sauras, the Vaiṣṇavas, and their precursors—the Pāñcarātras, the Bhāgavatas, and the Bhagavad-bhaktas—are mentioned.[75]

Reference is also made to Lokāyatas,[76] to Cārvāka, to haters of the Brāhmaṇas, to the shaven and the naked, and to those wearing the yellow robe. Buddha is called a *nāstika* in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

TRACES OF THE PHILOSOPHIC SYSTEMS

Cosmology: The *Mahābhārata* propounds different theories about cosmology: creation from the cosmic egg, by the primordial Person, by the duality of the sex, and by the unmanifest or impersonal Brahman. Brahmā is said to have sprung from a 'golden egg'. The personalistic hypothesis of creation is introduced by raising Śiva, or Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, to the status of the supreme Being, who is then considered Īśvara, or the personal God. The theory of Puruṣa and Prakṛti seems to be a direct development of the idea of *ardhanārīśvara* (god conceived as androgynous). Prakṛti is held to be different from the cosmic Puruṣa, and it is said to act either under

[67] *Mbh.*, XII. 56. 41.
[68] *Ibid.*, XII. 180. 47-8.
[69] *Ibid.*, XII. 343. 20.
[70] *Ibid.*, XII. 329. 6.
[71] *Ibid.*, XII. 284. 194-5.
[72] *Ibid.*, XIII. 159.
[73] XIV. 96. 17 ff.
[74] Cf. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 413 n 1.
[75] *Op. cit.*, p. 447.
[76] *Mbh.*, I. 70. 46.

His control,[77] or His impelling to activity the creative elements,[78] or alone.[79] Puruṣa and Prakṛti, again, are regarded as two aspects of Brahman. Brahmā is also said to have been created from Brahman, or *avyakta*.[80]

Sāṁkhya: The Sāṁkhya, which for the first time contributed to the metaphysical analysis, in Indian philosophy, has been adopted variously by schools of Indian thought. The *Mahābhārata* speaks of the Sāṁkhya as a system (*darśana*) and an enumeration (*pari-saṁkhyāna*).[81] The Sāṁkhya theory is discussed at several places in the *Mahābhārata*. Besides the theories of Pañcaśikha and Devala, the *Śāntiparvan* gives three different accounts of the cosmic principles of the Sāṁkhya system. In XII. 310. 8 ff, Yājñavalkya explains to Janaka the eight Prakṛtis comprising the *avyakta* (unmanifest), *mahat* (cosmic intelligence), *ahaṅkāra* (egoity), and the five gross elements, and the sixteen *vikāras* (modifications) comprising the five finer elements, the five organs of perception and the five organs of action, and the *manas*, thus constituting the twenty-four principles. In another place, the epic enumerates the principles as including *avyakta, oṣadhi*, Hiraṇya-garbha, the earth and the sky, *ahaṅkāra*, the five gross elements, and the five subtle elements.[82] The third account has *avyakta, jñāna, buddhi, manas*, etc.[83]

The Sāṁkhya, in its early phases, is called *nirīśvara* (atheistic), or devoid of a belief in a personal and supreme God.[84] Later, by the addition of the twenty-fifth principle, it is often designated *pañca-viṁśatika*. The *Yogins*, the Pāśupatas, and the Bhāgavatas, superadded the twenty-sixth principle, namely, 'one exalted spirit as supreme Spirit or God'. The epic Sāṁkhya assumes the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas*, and *tamas* ; gods, men, and beasts, come under the influence of these three qualities, and the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas, possess them in gradation. The problem of the plurality or unity of souls is discussed in detail.

Pañcaśikha Kāpileya[85] is said to be the first disciple of Āsuri, a disciple of Kapila, who was the propounder of the Sāṁkhya system, and was well-versed in the Pāñcarātra doctrine. Disgust with birth, disgust with acts, and disgust with all things (*sarva-nirveda*)—it is on these the foundation of the system of Pañcaśikha is based. *Nirvāṇa* is attained by the rejection of untrustworthy delusion (*anāśvāsika moha*), which leads to religious practices and hopes of reward. Pañcaśikha uses the terms '*sāṁkhya*', '*jīva*', and '*kṣetrajña*' (rather than Ātman). The thirty-one principles

[77] *Ibid.*, XII. 314. 12. [78] *Ibid.*, XII. 315. 8. [79] *Ibid.*, XII. 222. 15-6.
[80] *Ibid.*, XII. 311. 3. [81] *Ibid.*, XII. 315. 19 ; XIV. 46. 54-6.
[82] *Ibid.*, XII. 311. [83] *Ibid.*, XII. 204. 10-1. [84] *Ibid.*, XII. 300. 3.
[85] *Ibid*., XII. 218. 6 ff ; 320. 24 ff.

propounded by Pañcaśikha are enumerated as follows:[86] (i-xi) five *karmendriyas*, five *jñānendriyas*, and *manas* (ten organs and mind); (xii) *buddhi* (intellect); (xiii) *sattva* (equilibrium); (xiv) *ahaṅkāra* (egoity); (xv) *vāsanā* (general disposition); (xvi) *avidyā* (ignorance); (xvii) Prakṛti (Primordial Nature); (xviii) *māyā* (Creative Power); (xix) *sukha-duḥkha-priyāpriya-dvandva* (combination of the contraries in the form of happiness and misery, the pleasant and the unpleasant); (xx) *kāla* (time); (xxi-xxvii) *pañca-mahābhūtas, sadbhāva, asadbhāva* (forming seven constituents, i.e. five gross elements together with being and non-being); (xviii-xxx) *vidhi* (cause), *śukra* (seed), and *bala* (power); (xxxi) Puruṣa or Ātman (the source which is recognized by the philosophers to be the Unmanifest). It was probably after Pañcaśikha that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* added seven elements (desire; aversion, pleasure, pain, body, perception, and courage) to the twenty-four principles, making thirty-one in all. Hopkins describes Pañcaśikha's system as an advanced type of Brāhmaṇism minus *māyā*. According to Das Gupta, it is akin to the system preached by Caraka. Sulabhā, the disciple of Pañcaśikha, who attended the court of Janaka like her *guru*, preached that one should not have any attachment as 'one's own', because one's self is part of the same self in any other body composed of particles which revert to the unmanifest source.[87] Asita Devala, who is said to have received the glory of Śiva,[88] propounded a theory which speaks of the following elements:[89] five gross elements, *kāla, bhāva, abhāva*; ten organs; *citta, manas, buddhi*; *kṣetrajña* (the spirit). Death, in this theory, is caused by wind. The highest goal, according to Devala, lies in *ānanda*[90]—in the state of Brahman.

Yoga: Two kinds of *yogas* are described in the *Mahābhārata*: One, in which Rudra is spoken as the supreme and which enables a person to wander in the ten directions; and the other, the eightfold path (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*)[91] described in the Vedas, which is accepted by the classical school. Items of *yoga*, such as rules about diet and the mode of attaining the ultimate bliss, are also described. *Sāṁkhya* ensures knowledge, and *yoga*, health; through the first, one attains knowledge of the principles; and through the second, one attains direct perception. The *Mahābhārata* effects an amalgamation of the two by declaring both as equally efficacious.

Vaiṣṇavism: The Vaiṣṇavism preached in the *Mahābhārata* is varied in character. Vaiṣṇava elements are mainly found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*,[92] the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*,[93] and the *Anu-Gītā*.[94] At some places, Vaiṣṇavism

[86] *Ibid.*, XII. 320. 96-112.
[87] *Ibid.*, XII. 320. 25 ff.
[88] *Ibid.*, XIII. 18. 17.
[89] *Ibid.*, XII. 275.
[90] *Ibid.*, XII. 275. 16.
[91] *Ibid.*, XII. 316. 5 ff.
[92] *Ibid.*, VI. 25-42.
[93] *Ibid.*, XII. 174-367.
[94] *Ibid.*, XIV. 16-51.

is depicted as pantheism, to which is superadded a personal God ; at others, it is a theistic doctrine explained away by the *Vyūhas*. The doctrine of the *Vyūhas* set forth in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section may be summarized as follows: Vāsudeva: the supreme Soul, the internal ruler of all ; Saṅkarṣaṇa: primeval matter, Prakṛti ; Pradyumna: cosmic mind, *manas* ; Aniruddha: cosmic self-consciousness, *ahaṅkāra*. It is said that sometimes one *vyūha*, or form of the Lord, is taught, and sometimes two, three, or four.

Ekāntika religion, equivalent also to Nārāyaṇīya, Sātvata, Bhāgavata, Pāñcarātra, or Vaiṣṇava, however, is stated at many places to be the best form of Vaiṣṇavism. The *Nārāyaṇīya*[95] is the earliest exposition of the Ekāntika *dharma*, which preaches sole devotion to Nārāyaṇa or the supreme Lord, as the only means of seeing Him. The system is said to have been originally promulgated by the seven *ṛṣis*, the Citraśikhaṇḍins, in a hundred thousand verses containing rules, in harmony with the Vedas, for all affairs of men, and precepts about the religion of action and contemplation. In Śvetadvīpa, it is stated, reside men without senses, who do not eat anything, who are sinless devotees of the Lord, and who are absorbed in Him who is bright like the sun. The *Śāntiparvan* states that this *dharma* was revealed to Janamejaya in the *Hari-Gītā*, and also that it was related to Arjuna at the beginning of the war. The *Nārāyaṇīya* describes also the mode of creation and destruction, and the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Śvetadvīpa has been located somewhere near Egypt or Asia Minor by scholars, and some take the *Nārāyaṇīya* to be influenced by Christian doctrines. However, I agree with Winternitz when he observes, 'In my opinion, the description of Śvetadvīpa, referred to in both the epics, does not remind us of the Christian eucharist, but of heavenly regions such as Vaikuṇṭha, Goloka, Kailāsa, and the Sukhāvatī paradise of Buddha Amitābha.'[96]

Vedānta: There are some passages and whole chapters on the Vedāntic doctrine of Brahman. The *Sanat-sujātīya*[97] is an instance in point. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* also refers to the expression '*Vedāntakṛt*'.[98]

From the above analysis, one would feel inclined to state, after Deussen and Dahlmann, that the epic philosophy is a 'transition philosophy' between the period of the Upaniṣads and that of the later systems. What may be seen from the above outline is that the epics give only an enumeration of many systems in vogue from almost the post-Ṛg-Vedic times to the beginnings of the new systems. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* alone is probably a work of the type which Deussen and Dahlmann hinted at.

[95] *Ibid.*, XII. 334-51.
[96] *HIL.*, I. p. 440.
[97] *Mbh.*, V 41-6.
[98] XV. 15.

ETHICAL STANDARDS AND HUMAN DESTINY

The doctrines of Yājñavalkya, Pañcaśikha, Devala, Bhīṣma, Sanat-sujāta, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are imbued with the spirit of mysticism. And all ascetic poetry contained in the *Mahābhārata* represents the attitude of the Hindu mind towards problems of higher thought and wisdom. The ultimate goal of life is expressed in various terms such as *nirvāṇa, ānanda,* and *amṛta.* The heavens of the various gods, the world of Fathers, and the hell (*garta*) also find their place ; the goal of humanity is to avoid them, and to become free from the series of births and sorrows. It has been pointed out that both pleasure and pain are ephemeral (*anitya*), and that we must learn to bear them with composure.

The *Mahābhārata* describes the four *puruṣārthas* or human ends. *Dharma* is the code of life, the bond which keeps society together (cf. *dhāraṇād dharmamity āhuḥ* and *dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*).[99] The *Śānti-pravan* ordains: Whatever is not conducive to social welfare, and what you are likely to be ashamed of doing, never do it.[100] Whereas *dharma* is the genus and applies to all, the *āśramas* and *varṇas* are the species. It is generally ordained that one should observe rules of caste. But the epic has always made a distinction between the Brāhmaṇa and other castes. In course of the Brāhmaṇization of the *Mahābhārata*, several myths, legends, narratives, and discourses were added, exalting the Brāhmaṇas and placing them on a level superior to the gods themselves. However, the ascetic poetry found interspersed in the epic takes a broader view and reveals a generous mind. It is said, 'Truth, self-control, asceticism, generosity, non-violence, constancy in virtue—these are the means of success, not caste or family'.[101] One has to observe the rules of the *āśramas* also. A person is expected to fulfil his duties and obligations as a householder before his becoming an anchorite. The observance of *ācāra* (custom) is regarded as obligatory for all. In the case of conflict of opinion, one is to follow the footsteps of the great.

Itihāsa-saṁvādas, mostly belonging to 'ascetic poetry' teach universal morality, love of all human beings, and renunciation of the world ; they come under the category of *nīti.* The *Mahābhārata* enunciates the doctrine of Karma and states that by knowledge a person becomes free from the bond of rebirth. Discussions on the different types of Karma, and on the problem whether destiny or self-effort prevails in life are also met with. There is a general tone emphasizing the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* (non-injury) in the story of King Uparicara in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section, and also in dictums like, 'that which is conducive to the utmost welfare of human being is the

[99] *Mbh.,* VIII. 69. 59. [100] 109. 10 ; 124. 66 ; 260. 9. [101] *Mbh.,* III. 181. 42.

truth'.[102] On the other hand there is also the anecdote about the Vyādha (the meat dealer) who preached that one should lead a life according to one's own caste, and that it is not birth but a virtuous life that makes a Brāhmaṇa.[103]

The *summum bonum* of life is to have perfect peace of mind and joy which does not know sorrow in this world and the next. For the first time, it is the *Mahābhārata* that teaches the liberal doctrine that there cannot be any barrier of caste, creed, or sex, in the pursuit of emancipation. We have women philosophers like Sulabhā,[104] the courtesan Piṅgalā,[105] the lowly Dharma-vyādha, and the hawker Tulādhāra,[106] who were considered worthy teachers of philosophy and religion. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* teaches the three *yogas* or modes of life, namely, of *karma, bhakti,* and *jñāna,* with a widened meaning for the first time, and points out that God showers His grace on any devotee irrespective of caste, creed, and sex, and that even the offering of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water, with devotion, is acceptable to Him. It seems that the whole attempt of the *Mahābhārata* is to bring together the diverse philosophical systems of the time and give them a new colour and vigour. The *Gītā* is a unique document in this respect. We really find that in the light of the epic teachings the frustrated human mind calms down, as described in the case of Piṅgalā: 'Calmly sleeps Piṅgalā, after she has put non-desire in the place of wishes and hopes.'[107] Even the warrior King Janaka emphatically declares:

'How vast my wealth, what joy I hate,
Who nothing own and nought desire!
Were this fair city wrapped in fire,
The flame no goods of mine would waste.'[108]

[102] *Ibid.*, XII. 329. 13. [103] *Ibid.*, III. 207-16. [104] *Ibid.*, XII. 320.
[105] *Ibid.*, XII. 174. [106] *Ibid.*, XII. 261-4. [107] *Ibid.*, XII. 174. 62.
[108] *Ibid.*, XII. 178. 7 ff: Muir, *Metrical Translations*, p. 60.

7

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EPICS ON INDIAN LIFE AND LITERATURE

THE Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and the eighteen Purāṇas, form the massive basement on which stands the magnificent edifice of Indian religion and thought, culture and literature. Of these, the two great epics form the strongest single factor that has sustained and held together Indian life, in all its growth and ramifications, through the vicissitudes of centuries. The Vedas were confined chiefly to the priestly and aristocratic classes, and the Upaniṣads, to the intellectuals and philosophers; it was the epics and the Purāṇas that became the real Vedas for the masses and moulded their life and character for the last two thousand years. There is hardly any other work whose influence on all aspects of life in India has been so profound, lasting, and continuous as that of the epics and the Purāṇas. Language being the first and foremost means of expressing feelings and communicating thoughts, an account of the influence which epic poetry has exercised over Indian literature embodied in the different languages and in their various stages is given at some length.

INFLUENCE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA ON SUBSEQUENT SANSKRIT WORKS

First, it may be noted that the *Vanaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* contains the famous *Rāmopākhyāna*, which, while giving the Rāma story as we find it in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, neither mentions the fire ordeal of Sītā nor the incidents of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. There exists also a number of later religious works either narrating the Rāma story, e.g. the famous *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* (*c.* fourteenth century A.D.), the *Yogavāsiṣṭha-Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa*, or dealing with the Rāma cult, e.g. the *Rāma-pūrva-tāpanīya Upaniṣad*, the *Rāmottara-tāpanīya Upaniṣad*, and the *Rāmarahasya Upaniṣad*. Many of the Purāṇas and the Upapurāṇas also give the Rāma story generally according to Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, only at times differing in minor details.

Coming to the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on classical Sanskrit literature, it is noticeable from quite early times. Aśvaghoṣa (first-second century A.D.), a protégé King Kaniṣka, is probably the earliest author who was greatly influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇa*, he being indebted to it for many a poetic imagery and even his style and diction; but he did not adopt for a theme of his composition any episode from either of the epics,

so far as we know from his works that have come down to us. For that part of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa* (*c.* fifth century A.D.) which treats about Rāma, he has mainly depended on the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki; but of all the classical poets of Sanskrit, he has been throughout most profoundly influenced by this epic, both in matter and in spirit. Kālidāsa was led to perfection in his literary style and diction, poetic imagery and embellishments, by the great work of Vālmīki. His artistic skill, calm and serene outlook on life, deep penetration into the human mind, his romantic treatment of Nature—all these have been foreshadowed in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Even in the development of the plot of some of his works and the delineation of his characters, the influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on Kālidāsa is evident. For instance, his Kaṇva is no other than Vālmīki himself, the most humane of Indian *ṛṣis*, in another garb. The plot of the closing acts of the *Abhijñāna-Śakuntala* showing Śakuntalā repudiated by Duṣyanta and living in the hermitage of Marīci, where she gave birth to Bharata, seems to be modelled on the similar episode in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* describing Sītā's banishment by Rāma, her seeking shelter in Vālmīki's hermitage, and there her giving birth to the twin sons.

Bhaṭṭi (*c.* sixth-seventh century A.D.) describes the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in his *Rāvaṇa-vadha*, better known as *Bhaṭṭi-kāvya*, composed for the avowed purpose of illustrating the niceties of Sanskrit grammar. This work once enjoyed some popularity even outside India and influenced the authors of the Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa-Kākāwin* and *Carita-Rāmāyaṇa*. Kumāradāsa, highly praised by the rhetorician and poet Rājaśekhara, dealt with the Rāma story in his celebrated poem *Jānakī-haraṇa*, which has been preserved only partly. Some later ornate poems (*kāvyas*) which give the main story of *Rāmāyaṇa* are: (1) the *Rāma-carita* of Abhinanda, which gives the Rāma story beginning at Sītā's abduction and ending with the death of Kumbha and Nikumbha; (2) the highly artificial *Udāra-Rāghava* of Śākalyamalla, alias Mallācārya or Kavimalla, which has been partly preserved; (3) the *Citrabandha-Rāmāyaṇa* of Veṅkateśvara written in the highly artificial and difficult *citrabandha* style (in which verses are diagrammatically written 'in the form of sword, cross, wheel, and so forth');[4] (4) the voluminous *Rāmacandrodaya* in thirty cantos and (5) the *yamaka-kāvya* (paronomasial poem) *Rāma-yamakārṇava* of Veṅkateśa, son of Śrīnivāsa, written in A.D. 1635 and A.D. 1656, respectively; and (6) the *Rāmāyaṇa-mañjarī* of the Kashmiri polymath Kṣemendra (eleventh century A.D.).

The practice of producing *śleṣa-kāvya* (stanzas having double meaning) has led to a few works of little merit dealing simultaneously with two or more stories: e.g. (1) the *Rāma-carita* of Sandhyākara Nandin (eleventh

century A.D.), which gives simultaneously the story of Rāmacandra and that of Rāmapāladeva, the younger brother of King Mahīpāla II of Varendra (North Bengal); (2) the *Rāghava-Pāṇḍavīya* of Dhanañjaya, a Digambara Jaina of the twelfth century A.D., and (3) a work of the same name by Kavirāja (twelfth century A.D.), both giving the stories of the two epics at the same time; (4) the *Rāghava-Naiṣadhīya* of Haradatta Sūri giving the stories of Rāma and Nala; (5) the *Yādava-Rāghavīya* of Veṅkaṭādhvarin (seventeenth century A.D.), giving the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; and (6) the *Rāghava-Pāṇḍava-Yādavīya* (or *kathā-trayī*) of Cidambara (sixteenth-seventeenth century A.D.), giving the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The famous *Rāmāyaṇa-campū*, ascribed to King Bhoja (twelfth century A.D.) is written in mixed verse and prose—a style called the *campū*.

Of *kāvyas* dealing with isolated episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we may mention the *Rāvaṇārjunīya* of Bhaṭṭa Bhīma, Bhauma, or Bhaumaka, which, written for illustrating the rules of grammar, deals with Rāvaṇa's fight with Kārtavīryārjuna. To Kālidāsa and to King Pravarasena (*c.* fifth century A.D.) of Kashmir—the latter even has been sometimes identified with the former—is attributed the ornate Prakrit epic *Setubandha*, or *Rāvaṇa-vadha*, which relates the story of Rāma in fifteen cantos. It is supposed to have been composed to commemorate the building of a bridge of boats across the Vitastā (Jhelum) by King Pravarasena.

A large number of Sanskrit plays based on the main story or different episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, has been written from quite an early period down to modern times. Probably the earliest of the Rāma plays are the *Pratimā-nāṭaka* and the *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* attributed by some to Bhāsa (*c.* third century A.D.), a predecessor of Kālidāsa. Bhāsa dramatizes in the first play almost the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* story in seven acts, while in the six acts of the second play he deals with the Rāma story beginning at the slaying of Vālin and the anointment of Sugrīva, and ending with the fire-ordeal of Sītā and coronation of Rāma. In the development of the plots and the delineation of the characters the author has deviated in both these dramas considerably from the original *Rāmāyaṇa*. Bhavabhūti (eighth century A.D.), whose place in classical Sanskrit literature is next, perhaps, only to Kālidāsa, has handled the Rāma story in two of his plays, namely, the *Mahāvīra-carita* and the *Uttara-Rāma-carita*, his masterpiece. The former play deals with the early part of Rāma's life ending with his coronation; the latter begins with Sītā's exile and ends, contrary to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with her happy reunion with Rāma. The *Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa* of Rājaśekhara (*c.* A.D. 900) loosely dramatizes in ten acts the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* up to Rāma's coronation. The long and tedious *Hanūmān-*

nāṭaka, also called *Mahā-nāṭaka*, of Damodaramiśra (eleventh century A.D.) deals with the story of Rāma in fourteen acts, depicting his connection with his ally and devotee Hanūmat. King Yaśovarman of Kānyakubja (ninth century A.D.) is credited with a drama entitled *Rāmābhyudaya*, which is lost. This play consisted of six acts, and probably dealt with the entire Rāma story. The play *Udātta-Rāghava* of Māyurāja also is known only in name. Only some fragments of this work have been preserved in anthologies. A eulogistic verse of Rājaśekhara speaks of him as a Kalacuri poet, and nothing beyond this is known about him. Another Rāma drama, the *Chalita-Rāma*, is referred to by Dhanika in his commentary on the *Daśarūpaka*. Murāri (before the middle of the ninth century A.D.) is the author of the well-known drama *Anargha-Rāghava*. Bhīmṭa, who has been described as a Kāliñjarapati, seems to have won some fame with his lost drama, the *Svapna-Daśānana*. The logician Jayadeva (*c*. thirteenth century A.D.) treats of the Rāma story in his *Prasanna-Rāghava*, in the opening act of which both Rāvaṇa and the Asura Bāṇa are described as rivals for the hand of Sītā. The *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi* of Śaktibhadra, which is claimed to be the oldest South Indian play, and which is assigned to the ninth century A.D., deals with the Rāma story in seven acts, beginning with the Śūrpaṇakhā episode and ending with the fire-ordeal of Sītā. The *Kundamālā* of Vīranāga, incorrectly attributed by some to Diṅnāga, describes the Rāma story in six acts and is modelled on Bhavabhūti's *Uttara-Rāma-carita*. Vyāsa Śrīrāmadeva (fifteenth century A.D.) wrote the play *Rāmābhyudaya* dealing with the battle and conquest of Laṅkā, the fire-ordeal of Sītā, and the return of Rāma and others to Ayodhyā. Abhinavagupta and Kuntaka (both, tenth century A.D.) mention and quote from such lost Rāma dramas as *Chalita-Rāma*, *Kṛtya-Rāvaṇa*, and *Māyā-Puṣpaka*; nothing is known about their date and authorship. Mahādeva (middle of the seventeenth century A.D.) composed the play *Adbhuta-darpaṇa*, which gives the Rāma story beginning with Aṅgada's mission to Rāvaṇa and ending with Rāma's coronation. It introduces the interesting device of a magic mirror which shows to Rāma the events of Laṅkā.

Among the plays based on some smaller episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the following may be mentioned: the *Unmatta-Rāghava* of Bhāskara Kavi whose date is not known. It describes that when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were pursuing the golden deer, Sītā herself, by the curse of Durvāsas, was changed into a gazelle. Maddened with sorrow, Rāma wanders miserably in search of her, and finally finds her with the help of Agastya. The *Dūtāṅgada* composed by Subhaṭa in four scenes deals with Aṅgada's mission to Rāvaṇa for restoring Sītā to Rāma. This play was represented in A.D. 1242-43 at the court of the Cālukya king, Tribhuvanapāla,

Rāmabhadra Dīkṣita (seventeenth century A.D.) wrote the *Jānakīpariṇaya*, a drama dealing with Sītā's marriage with Rāma. He introduces the *rākṣasas* masquerading as Viśvāmitra, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, who lived in Madura in the first half of the seventeenth century A.D., wrote in nine acts the *Gaṅgāvatarana*, which deals with the famous legend of the descent of the river Gaṅgā to the earth as a result of the austerities of Bhagīratha.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA IN THE BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The main story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been retold in the famous *Daśaratha Jātaka* (No. 461) in a startlingly distorted form. Sītā is represented in it as the sister of Rāma, whom she marries later on, after their return from their exile in the Himalayas. In this work there is no mention of the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa and all the subsequent events. It is generally believed to have been based on a much older version of the Rāma story ; but it has now been shown that the case may just be the reverse. The *Jayaddisa Jātaka* (No. 518) and the *Vessantara Jātaka* (No. 547) each contains a *gāthā* showing that the authors of these *gāthās* were acquainted with the Brāhmaṇical version of the Rāma story. The scene of prince Vessantara's departure into exile vividly recalls that of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Anāmaka Jātaka*, which was translated into Chinese in the third century A.D., but the original of which is now lost, refers to most of the incidents found in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* without giving the names of the characters. Rāma here is regarded as a Bodhisattva. The *Sāma Jātaka* (No. 540) is practically identical with the story of Daśaratha's killing the son of Andhaka-muni, which incident Daśaratha narrates from his death-bed. The story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (Isisṛṅga in Pali) recurs in the Jātakas (Nos. 523 and 526) and an old form of it is preserved in the *Naḷinikā Jātaka* (No. 526).

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA ON JAINA LITERATURE

The Jains not only adapted many popular epic stories and episodes, diverging widely from the original, but also composed poems of their own, which were to serve them as a complete substitute for the great epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The main characteristics of the Jaina *Rāmāyaṇa* are: the principal characters are either Jaina by birth, or later on become Jaina monks ; Rāma is the eighth Baladeva, Lakṣmaṇa, Vāsudeva, and Rāvaṇa, Prativāsudeva according to the Jaina notion. Vāsudeva along with his elder brother Baladeva, fights against Prativāsudeva whom he ultimately kills, and as a consequence of this act of killing he falls into hell. Repentful Baladeva becomes a Jaina monk and attains *mokṣa*. Another

characteristic, in perfect conformity with the Jaina doctrine of *ahiṁsā*, is that the Jaina version does not believe that Rāma used to hunt animals, or that Rāvaṇa and others ate meat. The earliest work of this kind is the Prakrit epic *Paüma-cariya* (= Padma-carita) by Vimala Sūri, written in about the third or fourth century A.D. It is written in pure Jaina Mahārāṣṭri Prakrit and contains 118 cantos. Vimala Sūri's work follows the story of Vālmīki in general outlines only, but differs widely from it in details. Even the personal names sometimes differ, e.g. Rāma is known more frequently as Padma; his mother's name is Aparājitā. Later Jaina versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are all modelled on Vimala Sūri's work. Raviṣeṇa wrote in A.D. 678 his *Padma Purāṇa*, 'which is merely a slightly extended recension of the *Paüma-cariya* in Sanskrit, agreeing with it in all essential points'. The sixty-eighth *parvan* of the *Uttara Purāṇa*, the seventh *parvan* (known as *Jaina-Rāmāyaṇa*) of the *Triṣaṣṭi-śalākā-puruṣa-carita* of Hemacandra, and Padmadeva-vijayagaṇin's Sanskrit prose work *Rāma-caritra* (written in A.D. 1596), also deal with the Rāma story. The Rāma story has been briefly retold in many *Kathā-kośas* also; for instance, see the *Rāmāyaṇa-kathānaka* and *Sītā-kathānaka* in Hariṣeṇa's *Kathā-kośa* (tenth century A.D.) and the ninth canto of the *Śatruñjaya-māhātmya* of Dhaneśvara (twelfth century A.D.); the story of Kuśa and Lava is found in the *punyāśravaka-kathākośa* of Rāmacandra Mumukṣu (written in A.D. 1331). The legend of the descent of the Gaṅgā and destruction of the sixty thousand sons of Sagara is told in Devendra's commentary on the *Uttarājjhayana*.

INFLUENCE OF THE RAMAYAṆA ON MODERN INDIAN LITERATURES

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* began to influence the modern Indian literatures roughly from their early mediaeval period. For centuries before that, people in all parts of India were no doubt acquainted with the stories of the epics; but direct access to the originals was confined to the learned few. So the need for their translation, or adaptation into the spoken languages of the day, was badly felt, and the revival of the Bhakti cult in different parts of India and, in some cases, the interest taken by local rulers soon supplied it. Once the golden gate to the vast treasure-house of romances and legends was opened widely, modern Indian literatures got an opportunity to become nurtured, nourished, and enriched. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration ever since.

Assamese: The earliest extant metrical translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Assamese was made by Mādhava Kandalī who flourished under King Mahāmāṇikya (fourteenth century A.D.). His translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is 'remarkable for the constant fidelity to the original'. Durgābar, a popular poet of about the fourteenth century A.D., composed the *Gīti-Rāmāyaṇa*

which is still sung on festive occasions and at social carnivals. Śaṅkara Deva (A.D. 1449-1569), a great Vaiṣṇava saint and the 'real founder of Assamese literature', translated Book Seven of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in verse. Among the dramas written by him one is *Rāma-vijaya*. Mādhava Deva (*c.* A.D. 1489), a disciple of Śaṅkara Deva, composed the *Rāmāyaṇa Ādikāṇḍa*. Raghunātha wrote the *Kathā-Rāmāyaṇa* in prose. Many works dealing with the various episodes from the epics were composed during the Vaiṣṇava period of Assamese literature. Many popular writers of songs chose such episodes as the marriage of Sītā 'for describing the erotic sentiment with a romantic background within domestic surroundings'. Amongst modern poets, Bholanath Das wrote the *Sītā-haraṇa-kāvya* (A.D. 1888) in blank verse, on the model set by the Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Datta.

Bengali: The first and yet the best and the most popular Bengali adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was made by Kṛttivāsa in the fifteenth century A.D., at the command of a ruler of Bengal (Gauḍeśvara) who is usually identified as Kaṁsanārāyaṇa (alias Gaṇeśa), or his son Yadu who adopted the name Jalāluddin after his conversion to Islam. Though Kṛttivāsa was a great Sanskrit scholar, he did not make a literal translation of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*; he introduced the battle of Taraṇīsena, the untimely worship of the goddess Durgā by Rāma, the episodes of Mahirāvaṇa and Ahirāvaṇa, and the rest, not found in the original *Rāmāyaṇa*. Some other Bengali versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which once enjoyed popularity in different parts of Bengal are: the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Nityānanda or Adbhutācārya (seventeenth century A.D.) which is based on the *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa*; the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Śivacandra Sen; of Phakirrām Kavibhūṣaṇa; and of Bhavāniśaṅkar Vandya; the *Aṅgada-rāibār* of Kavicandra (all of the eighteenth century A.D.); and the *Rāmāyaṇa* of the poetess Candrāvatī. In modern times Michael Madhusudan Datta, one of the greatest poets of Bengal, wrote his epic poem, the *Meghanāda-vadha-kāvya* (published in A.D. 1861), in blank verse, deriving the plot from a well-known episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Girish Chandra Ghosh, the famous actor, producer, and playwright, wrote his dramas *Rāvaṇa-vadha* (1881), *Sītār-vanavāsa* (1881), and *Sītār-vivāha* (1882), based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The abridged prose translation of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* by Rajasekhara Basu, better known as Paraśurām, is a distinct recent contribution to Bengali literature.

Gujarati: Premānanda, the greatest literary figure in Gujarati in the seventeenth century A.D., wrote a complete version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Raṇa-yajña* describing the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Giradhara (A.D. 1787-1852) is the author of another well-known Gujarati rendering of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Bhālaṇa (*c.* fifteenth century A.D.), who may be regarded as the father of the *ākhyāna* in Gujarati, wrote the *Rāma-viraha* and the

Rāmabāla-carita. Mantrī Karmaṇa (*c*. A.D. 1470) also wrote an *ākhyāna* by name the *Sītā-haraṇa*. Among modern authors, Janmashankar Mahashankar Buch, born in A.D. 1877, has written the *Sītā-vanavāsa* which was published in A.D. 1903.

Hindi: The beginning of Rāma poetry in Hindi literature can be traced back to the devotional poems and songs (*bhajans*) of many preachers of the Rāma-bhakti cult, for example, Rāmānanda (fifteenth century A.D.) and his disciples. Tulasīdāsa, the greatest poet of mediaeval India, is the author of the famous *Rāma-carita-mānasa* which he began to write in A.D. 1575 and completed in more than two years. Tulasīdāsa followed the general outline of Vālmīki, but introduced many new episodes even in the main story. With Tulasīdāsa and authors of other *Bhāṣā Rāmāyaṇas*, Rāma is an incarnation of God. Both as a literary piece and as a devotional poem the *Rāma-carita-mānasa* is one of the best works in any Indian language and has been a Bible to millions of Hindus of Northern India down to the present day. Some minor works of Tulasīdāsa on the Rāma cult are the *Rāma-gītāvalī* and the *Dohā-Rāmāyaṇa*. Keśava Dās (A.D. 1555-1617) is the author of a work named *Rāma-candrikā*. Cintāmaṇi Tripāṭhi (middle of the seventeenth century A.D.), who was patronized by Emperor Shāh Jāhān and others, wrote a *Rāmāyaṇa* in *kavitta* and other metres. Mān Dās, born in A.D. 1623, wrote a poem entitled *Rāma-caritra* which is based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki and the *Hanumān-nāṭaka*. The *Rāma-vilāsa-Rāmāyaṇa* of Īśvarī Prasād Tripāṭhī (A.D. 1673) is a translation of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Prāṇacand Chauhān wrote his *Rāmāyaṇa-mahānāṭaka* in A.D. 1610. Other works dealing with the Rāma story, or episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are: *Avadha-sāgara* of Jānk Rasiki Śaran (early eighteenth century A.D.); a *Rāmāyaṇa* by Bhagwant Ray (A.D. 1750); the *Rāmāśvamedha* of Madhusūdan Dās (*c*. A.D. 1782), who was a poet of considerable merit; *Saundarya-laharī*, *Sundarakāṇḍa*, and *Hanumān Cabbīsī*, all dealing with some episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and composed by Maniyar Singh (*c*. A.D. 1785); and a metrical translation of parts of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* by Gaṇeśa (A.D. 1800). Lalāka Dās (nineteenth century A.D.) wrote the *Satyopākhyāna* dealing with the early life of Rāma from his birth to his marriage In the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Janki Prasad, Mahanta Ram Charan Das, Babu Raghunath Das, and Maharaj Raghuraj Singh wrote many excellent works based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Maithili: Chandra Jha is the author of the Maithilī version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Kannada: The earliest *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kannada was written by Nāgacandra or Abhinava Pampa (*c*. A.D. 1100) whose masterly work, the *Rāmacandra-caritra Purāṇa*, is commonly known as the *Pampa-Rāmāyaṇa*. It

gives a Jaina version of the Rāma story and differs considerably from the original work. Some other Jaina versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kannada are the *Kumudendu-Rāmāyaṇa* in *ṣaṭpadī* metre (c. A.D. 1275), the *Rāma-kathāvatāra* in prose (c. A.D. 1297) by Devacandra, and the *Rāma-vijaya-carita* by Devappa (sixteenth century A.D.). Narahari, who called himself Kumāra Vālmīki, wrote (about A.D. 1590) the Kannada adaptation of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*. The work was produced at Torave and hence is commonly known as the *Torave Rāmāyaṇa*. It does not contain the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. Some other Brāhmaṇical versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kannada are: the two versions of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, both known as *Uttara-Rāmāyaṇa*, by Tirumal Vaidya and Yogendra (middle of the seventeenth century A.D.), and the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa* by Timmarāya (early eighteenth century A.D.). Among modern works in Kannada based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, special mention should be made of the *Rāmāyaṇa-darśanam* by Shri K. V. Puttappa.

Kashmiri: The Kashmiri *Rāmāyaṇa* was composed by Divākara Prakāśa Bhaṭṭa towards the end of the eighteenth century A.D. One noteworthy feature of this *Rāmāyaṇa* is that the whole story is related in the form of a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī. It has many episodes which are found in the Bengali and some other *Bhāṣā Rāmāyaṇas*, but are absent from the original work.

Malayalam: The *Rāma-caritam*, ascribed to the fourteenth century A.D., is the earliest work in Malayalam based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is a summary in verse of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the poet follows Vālmīki, more or less faithfully. Punam Nampūtiri, a poet in the court of a Zamorin of Calicut in the fifteenth century A.D., wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa-campū* which is a masterpiece in the *maṇipravāla* style, in which Sanskrit and Malayalam words are freely mixed. The *Kaṇṇaśśa-Rāmāyaṇa* of Kaṇṇaśśa Panikkar was produced in the sixteenth century A.D. It is a close adaptation of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*. Ezhuttaccan (A.D. 1575-1650) translated the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*. This work is the most popular *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kerala and may be regarded as the 'household Bible' of every Malayalee Hindu. The Kathakali literature of Kerala, which was widely cultivated for two centuries (1650-1850), was mainly based on the episodes from the two great epics and the Purāṇas. Rāma Varma, one of the pioneers of the Kathakali, dealt with the story of Rāma written to suit the Kathakali stage. Amongst modern works based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* mention may be made of Azhakattu Padmanabha Kurup's *Rāmacandra-vilāsam*, the late poet Vallathol's metrical translation of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and K. M. Panikkar's drama, the *Mandodarī*.

Marathi: Ekanātha, a great saint of the sixteenth century A.D. (born in A.D. 1548), composed the first *Rāmāyaṇa* in Marathi, entitled *Bhāvārtha-*

Rāmāyaṇa. It contains about 40,000 couplets in *ovī* metre. It is based on the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa*. Ekanātha left the work incomplete ; it was later on completed by his disciple Gāövā. Mukteśvara, a maternal grandson of Ekanātha, composed a *Rāmāyaṇa* probably in his early youth. It is written in different *śloka* metres and contains over 700 stanzas. Samartha Rāmadāsa (A.D. 1608), one of the greatest saints of the Mahārāṣṭra, wrote three Books of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, viz. *Kiṣkindhā-*, *Sundara-*, and *Yuddhakāṇḍas* in Marathi. The work consists of about 16,000 verses in the *bhujaṅgaprayāta* metre. Śrīdhara (born in A.D. 1678) is the author of the most popular adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* in Marathi. His *Rāmāyaṇa* is known as *Rāmavijaya*. Copies of Śridhara's work, whether in print or manuscripts, are to be found in almost every village of Mahārāṣṭra, and 'groups of village folk, young and old, male as well as female' can be seen listening to the recitation or singing of Śrīdhara's works at night. The *Rāma-vijaya* consists of about 10,000 couplets in *ovī* metre. 'What Kāśīrāma and Kṛttivāsa have together done for Bengal, Śrīdhara has singly done for the public of Mahārāṣṭra.' Moropant (born in A.D. 1729), the greatest Marathi poet of the eighteenth century A.D., has composed about 108 short *Rāmāyaṇas* to propitiate his family deity Rāma. Some of these *Rāmāyaṇas* are: the *Pṛthvī-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Vibudhapriya-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Pañca-cāmara Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Savāi-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Dāma-Rāmāyaṇa* or '*Chain-Rāmāyaṇa*, in which each word at the end of a hemistich is repeated at the beginning of the next *pada* ; the *Laghu-Rāmāyaṇa* which contains only short (*laghu*) syllables ; the *Niroṣṭha-Rāmāyaṇa* which contains no labials ; the *Kāśī-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Gaṅgā-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Mantra-Rāmāyaṇa* ; the *Parantu-Rāmāyaṇa* consists of about 250 *āryās*. Moropant's *Rāmāyaṇas* are 'simply acrobatic feats in the field of versification' and 'are meant only for those who know something of Sanskrit and Sanskritic constructions'. Ānandatanaya (*c*. seventeenth century A.D.) composed the *Sītā-svayaṁvara* in verse. 'On account of the verbal beauties his compositions are pleasing to the reader.' Amongst modern works based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* we may mention the names of *Sītā-śuddhi* (*ākhyāna*) by Panta Pratinidhi, *Sītā-svayaṁvara* (drama) by Abhayankar, *Rāma-rājya-viyoga* (drama) by Anna Kirloskar, *Rāvaṇa-vadha* or *Sītā-bhet* (drama) by Shastri, the anonymous *Sītā-haraṇa* (novel), the prose and metrical translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kulkarni and Bhide respectively, and the very popular *Gītā-Rāmāyaṇa* by Madgulkar.

Oriya: Balarāma Dāsa, one of the *pañca sakhās* or 'five friends' of Oriya literature, wrote the first Oriya *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is the most popular of more than a dozen Oriya versions of this epic. Like Sarala Dāsa's

Mahābhārata Balarāma Dāsa's work also is 'thoroughly dyed with the local colour'. His work is known as *Jagamohana-Rāmāyaṇa,* more popularly called *Daṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa.* He flourished in the sixteenth century A.D. Dhanañjaya Bhañja, who ruled the Ghumusar State, now in Ganjam district, from A.D. 1637 to 1701, wrote the *Raghunātha-vilāsa.* One of the most popular works in Orissa is Haladhara Dāsa's Oriya version of the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa,* composed in the seventeenth century A.D. Upendra Bhañja, another scion of the Ghumusar royal family, who flourished between A.D. 1670 and 1710, wrote many works based on the epics. His *Vaidehīśa-vilāsa* is based on the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Keśava Haricandara wrote a *Rāmāyaṇa* in verse in the eighteenth century A.D. Viśvanātha Khuṇṭiyā wrote the *Vicitra-Rāmāyaṇa* in the same century. Amongst modern works based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* may be mentioned Gangadhara Meher's *Tapasvinī,* Kamapal Mishra's *Sītā-vivāha,* Nandakishore Bala's *Sītā-vanavāsa,* Ram Shankar Ray's *Rāma-vanavāsa,* and Harihar Ratha's *Rāvaṇa-vadha, Rāmābhiṣekā, Rāma-nirvāsana,* and *Rāma-janma.* Phakirmohan Senapati's metrical translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is another important work in Oriya literature.

Tamil: The commentary on the ancient Tamil work *Yāpparuṅgalam* mentions a Tamil adaptation (not extant) of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in *paḥṟoḍai veṇbā* metre which may be assigned to *c.* A.D. 650, and is perhaps the earliest translation of this epic in any living language of India. The hymns composed by the Vaiṣṇava Aḷvārs called the *Divya-prabandha,* which is dated between third and eighth century A.D., contain many references to the *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes. The *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Kamban of immortal fame (tenth century A.D.) is regarded as the greatest epic in Tamil literature, and it is popular even today. Kamban has introduced some new incidents in his work and has 'handled the subject matter with a mastery and originality and a depth of poetic experience seldom equalled in Tamil literature'. C. Rajagopalachari's adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* entitled *Cakravartti-t-tirumakan,* is a popular work in Tamil. Piecemeal or abridged, translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Tamil have also been made by Tetiyur Subrahmanya Shastri, T. Sundarachari, and Anantarama Dikshita. *Ilaṅkeśvaran* is a recent drama based on the episode of the *Sītā-haraṇa.*

Telugu: The earliest writers of the available Telugu versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are Raṅganātha and the authors of the *Bhāskara-Rāmāyaṇa,* namely, Hulakki Bhāskara, his son Mallikārjuna Bhaṭṭa, his friend Ayyalārya, and his disciple Rudradeva. Raṅganātha's *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have really been composed by Buddharāju, a tributary prince under Pratāparudra II of Waraṅgal, and dedicated to Raṅganātha. This work is popularly known as *Dvipāda-Rāmāyaṇa* after the name of the metre in

which it is written. Buddharāju's son completed it by adding the *Uttara-Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Bhāskara-Rāmāyaṇa* is written in the *campū* style and has great literary merits. These two *Rāmāyaṇas* belong to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century A.D. The most popular *Rāmāyaṇa* in Telugu is the *Molla Rāmāyaṇa* composed in the sixteenth century A.D. by a woman named Molla. In the eighteenth century A.D. was composed the *Gopīnātha-Rāmāyaṇa* in the *campū* style. Tikkana wrote the *Nirvacanottara-Rāmāyaṇa* in verse narrating the story of Rāma after his coronation. The *Rāghavābhyudayamu* is attributed to Nannaya (eleventh century A.D.). The *Rāmāyaṇa* by Yerrapraggada has not been discovered so far. In the present century, Mahāmahopādhyāya Krishnamurti Shastri has composed a metrical translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The greatest work of a modern Telugu poet, Visvanatha Satyanarayana, is the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is probably yet to be completed.

INFLUENCE OF THE MAHABHARATA ON CLASSICAL SANSKRIT WORKS

Quite a large number of *mahā-kāvyas, khaṇḍa-kāvyas*, and plays—based mostly on various episodes, and a few on the entire story, of the *Mahābhārata*—were written in classical Sanskrit from the early centuries of the Christian era. One of the earliest of such *mahā-kāvyas* is the celebrated *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravi (*c.* sixth century A.D.) which is based on a simple episode from the *Vanaparvan* and describes in eighteen cantos Arjuna's propitiation of Śiva for divine weapons. Māgha (*c.* latter part of the seventh century A.D.) wrote his *Śiśupāla-vadha*—slaying of Śiśupāla, the king of Cedi, by Kṛṣṇa—on the simple episode of the *Mahābhārata*, which he expanded into twenty cantos by a series of lengthy descriptions. Kṣemendra of Kashmir wrote the *Mahābhārata-mañjarī* probably in A.D. 1037. Anantabhaṭṭa wrote the *Bhārata-campū* in twelve *stabakas*, or chapters. Vāsudeva, author of the *Nalodaya*, wrote a *yamaka-kāvya*, the *Yudhiṣṭhira-vijaya*, which gives the story of the *Mahābhārata* beginning with the hunting sports of Pāṇḍu and ending in the coronation of Yudhiṣṭhira. Amaracandra Sūri, who flourished under Viśaladeva of Gujarat in the first half of the thirteenth century A.D., attempted a close adaptation of the complete *Mahābhārata* in nineteen cantos in his *Bāla-Bhārata*. Nītivarman, who flourished in some eastern province before the eleventh century A.D., handled the episode of Bhīma's slaying Kīcaka in his *yamaka-kāvya*, the *Kīcaka-vadha*. Vastupāla, who died in A.D. 1242 and who was a minister of King Vīradhavala of Dholka, dealt with the friendship of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and the latter's marriage with Subhadrā, in sixteen cantos, in his *Naranārāyaṇānanda*. We do not know anything definitely about the exact source of Kālidāsa's early but famous work, the

Kumārasambhava, describing the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. The story is, however, found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*.

The story of Nala and Damayantī is one of the most romantic and pathetic episodes in the *Mahābhārata*, and it is a true gem of literature. A large number of later *kāvyas*, plays, and *campūs* are indeed based on this episode. The most famous and also voluminous of such works is the celebrated *Naiṣadha-carita* of Śrīharṣa who flourished probably under Vijayacandra and Jayacandra of Kanauj in the latter half of the twelfth century A.D. Even in twenty-two cantos Śrīharṣa deals only with part of the Nala story. The work is reckoned among the five great *mahā-kāvyas* in Sanskrit. The entire story of Nala has been dealt with in fifteen cantos in the *Sahṛdayānanda* by Kṛṣṇānanda, a Mahāpātra to a certain king of Puri before the fourteenth century A.D., and in eight cantos in the *Nalābhyudaya* by Vāmanabhaṭṭa Bāṇa, who was a court poet of the Reddi prince Vema of Koṇḍavīḍu at the close of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century A.D. The Kerala poet Vāsudeva, a contemporary of King Kulaśekhara-varman (*c.* ninth century A.D.), deals with the same story in his *Nalodaya*, a *yamaka-kāvya*. The *Nala-campū*, or *Damayantī-kathā*, of Trivikrama-bhaṭṭa (tenth century A.D.) has been written in the *campū* style; only a small part of the story has been told in its seven *ucchvāsas* written in highly ornamental style. Rāmacandra, a pupil of Hemacandra (twelfth century A.D.), has composed the *Nala-vilāsa*, a drama in seven acts. Some other minor or less known works dealing with the same theme are *Nala-carita* (a drama by Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita), *Nala-bhūmipāla-rūpaka* (a drama), *Nala-Yādava-Rāghava-Pāṇḍavīya* (a *śleṣa-kāvya* giving the four stories parallely), *Nala-varṇana-kāvya* by Lakṣmīdhara, and the play *Nalānanda* by Jīvavibudha. The *Rāghava-Naiṣadhīya* of Haradatta Sūri has been referred to early. Kṣemīśvara (tenth century A.D.), the author of the *Caṇḍa-Kauśika*, wrote also the *Naiṣadhānanda* in seven acts dealing with the same story.

Quite a large number of plays, based on the main story, or the various episodes of the *Mahābhārata*, have been written in Sanskrit. Probably the earliest of them are the six *Mahābhārata* plays ascribed to Bhāsa (*c.* third century A.D.). His *Madhyama-vyāyoga* deals with the reunion of Bhīma with his demon-wife Hiḍimbā under extraordinary circumstances and reminds one of the epic tale of the demoness's love for Bhīma and the birth of their son Ghaṭotkaca. The *Dūta-Ghaṭotkaca* of Bhāsa deals with the message delivered by Ghaṭotkaca to the Kauravas, who were jubilant over the death of Abhimanyu; the message was that the latter's death would be avenged by Arjuna; the *Pañcarātra* deals with the robbing of Virāṭa's cows by the Kauravas, but it differs from the original in many details; the

Dūta-vākya deals with Kṛṣṇa's message to Duryodhana demanding a half of the kingdom for the Pāṇḍavas; the *Ūru-bhaṅga* describes the duel between Bhīma and Duryodhana in which the latter's thigh was broken by Bhīma striking with his massive club; the *Karṇābhara* deals with Indra's taking away the magic ear-rings of Karṇa after approaching him in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa. Bhāsa often shows much ingenuity and novelty in handling his subject. In his *Abhijñāna-Śakuntala*, Kālidāsa, with the touch of his genius has immortalized the rather crude story of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā as told in the *Mahābhārata*. This work has universally been acclaimed as one of the brightest gems in world literature. The *Veṇī-saṁhāra* of Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa (before A.D. 800) turns round the incident of the great insult suffered by Draupadī when she was dragged by her hair by Duryodhana's younger brother Duḥśāsana in the former's court and Draupadī's promise of not braiding her hair until she was avenged. Duḥśāsana is slain by Bhīma and according to this drama, after some incidents not found in the *Mahābhārata*, Draupadī binds up her locks. Rājaśekhara (tenth century A.D.) wrote his play *Bāla-Bhārata*, also called *Pracaṇḍa-Pāṇḍava*, dealing with the main story of the *Mahābhārata*. The work is left unfinished and covers only up to the gambling scene and Duḥśāsana's insult of Draupadī. The *Citra-Bhārata* of Kṣemendra is lost. The Kerala king Kulaśekhara-varman (*c.* ninth century A.D.) wrote two *Mahābhārata* plays, viz. the *Subhadrā-Dhanañjaya* and the *Tapatī-Saṁvaraṇa*. Prahlādanadeva (*c.* twelfth century A.D.) wrote the *Pārtha-parākrama* dealing with the raid of Virāṭa's cows by the Kauravas and their defeat at the hands of Arjuna. The same theme has been handled by Kāñcana Paṇḍita in his *Dhanañjaya-vijaya*. The date of the work is not known. It ends with the marriage of Uttarā, daughter of the king of Virāṭa, with Arjuna's son Abhimanyu. The legend of the churning of the ocean by the gods and Asuras has been dramatized by Vatsarāja, a minister of Paramardideva of Kālañjara (A.D. 1163-1203), in his *Samudra-manthana* in three acts. The *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* mentions a play, the *Śarmiṣṭhā-Yayāti*, which may be the same as the work of that name by Kṛṣṇa Kavi. Hastimalla wrote (about A.D. 1200) the *Vikrānta-Kaurava* in six acts. Vijayapāla, a contemporary of the Cālukya king, Kumārapāla (twelfth century A.D.), dramatized Draupadī's marriage in two acts, in his *Draupadī-svayaṁvara*. The same theme has been treated also by Vyāsa Śrīrāmadeva (fifteenth century A.D.) in his *Pāṇḍavābhyudaya* in two acts. Two plays dealing with the exploits and adventures of Bhīma are the *Nirbhaya-Bhīma* of Rāmacandra (second half of the twelfth century A.D.) which gives the story of Bhīma's slaying the demon Baka and the *Bhīma-vikrama-vyāyoga* of Mokṣāditya (earlier than fourteenth century A.D.). The lively one-act

drama *Saugandhikā-haraṇa* of Viśvanātha, who flourished under the Warangal ruler Pratāparudra (about A.D. 1291-1322), and the *Kalyāṇa-saugandhika* of the Kerala author Nīlakaṇṭha (seventeenth century A.D.), dramatized Bhīma's encounter with Hanūmat in his adventure for fetching the *saugandhika* flowers for Draupadī from a lake belonging to Kubera. The anonymous *Haridūta*, like the *Dūta-vākya* of Bhāsa, deals with Kṛṣṇa's mission to the Kauravas for seeking peace between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. Vyāsa Śrīrāmadeva, the author of the *Pāṇḍavābhyudaya*, wrote another *Mahābhārata* drama, the *Subhadrā-pariṇaya*, dealing with the story of Arjuna's winning Subhadrā as his bride. The same theme has been treated also by Mādhava (before seventeenth century A.D.) in his *Subhadrā-haraṇa*. Saṅkaralāla, son of Maheśvara, wrote in A.D. 1882 the *Sāvitrī-caritra* which deals with the undying legends of Sāvitrī and Satyavat. Among the lost *Mahābhārata* plays, we may mention the *Mukuṭa-tāḍitaka*, ascribed to Bāṇa by Bhoja, and the *Caṇḍapāla* which dealt with Bhīma's fight with Duryodhana.

INFLUENCE OF THE MAHABHARATA IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

Although the Pali text deals with the main story of the *Mahābhārata*, references to *Mahābhārata* characters, parallels to some *Mahābhārata* incidents, and many episodes occuring in the *Mahābhārata* are found in Pali works. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*[1] narrates how Buddha satisfies a *yakṣa* with his wise answers just as Yudhiṣṭhira does in an episode in the *Mahābhārata*. The dialogues in the Suttas very often remind one of similar dialogues in the *Mahābhārata*. Vidhura in the famous *Vidhura-paṇḍita Jātaka*[2] is no other than Vidura of the *Mahābhārata*. Jātaka No. 495 describes the dialogue between Yudhiṭṭhila (=Yudhiṣṭhira) and Vidhura (Vidura) on the question of 'who is a true Brāhmaṇa'. The story of King Śibi occurs in the Jātakas also. The Kṛṣṇa legend has been dealt with in several Jātakas (for instance, the *Ghaṭa-Jātaka*, No. 355). An almost deliberately distorted account of Draupadī is found in the story of Kanha (<Kṛṣṇa) in the *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, Draupadī is represented as committing adultery with a hunchbacked dwarf. Among other *Mahābhārata* episodes found in the Jātakas, one is that of Māṇḍavya in Jātaka No. 444.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MAHABHARATA IN JAINA LITERATURE

The Jaina version of the *Mahābhārata*, like that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, has its own characteristics, and it is termed *Harivaṁśa*. Kṛṣṇa (Vāsudeva) is the major figure, Balarāma is the second important figure, and the arch-

[1] X. 12.

[2] Jātaka No. 545.

enemy (Prativāsudeva) is Jarāsandha. The fight between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas is almost omitted in the Śvetāmbara version, while the Digambaras closely follow the Brāhmaṇic version. All the stories get mixed up with the life of Ariṣṭanemi, the reigning Tīrthaṅkara of the period and a cousin of Vāsudeva. Almost all the characters, including the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, are converted to Jainism. Jaina doctrines and sermons are frequently inserted. The earliest extant work of this nature is the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* in sixty-six chapters by Jinasena which was completed in the year A.D. 783. It belongs to the Digambara sect. The *Uttara Purāṇa* of Guṇabhadra (ninth century A.D.) which forms a part of the *Triṣaṣṭi-lakṣaṇa-Mahāpurāṇa* (or simply *Mahāpurāṇa*), the *Pāṇḍava Purāṇa* or 'Jaina-Mahābhārata' of Śubhacandra (written in A.D. 1551), and the tenth to twelfth *sargas* of the *Śatruñjaya-māhātmya*, also deal with the *Mahābhārata* story. The *Pāṇḍava-carita* of Maladhārin Devaprabha Sūri (*c*. A.D. 1200) gives in eighteen *sargas* a concise account of the eighteen *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata* with a remodelling of many of the details. The *Pāṇḍava Purāṇa* by Asaga (eleventh century A.D.) is a Digambara version of the *Mahābhārata* in Sanskrit; closely following the Brāhmaṇical version. Śīlācārya deals with the *Mahābhārata* story in his own way in the Prakrit prose work *Caupanna-mahāpurisa-cariya* (written in A.D. 868). The *Mahāpurāṇa*, or *Tisaṭṭhi-mahāpurisa-guṇālaṅkāra*, in Apabhraṁśa, by Puṣpadanta (A.D. 965) also gives the story of the *Mahābhārata*. Chapter sixteen of the *Nāyā-Dhammakahāö* gives the story of Dovaī (Draupadī) in a corrupt form of a story of rebirth. The last book of the *Kathā-kośa* gives the story of Nala and Davadantī (= Damayantī), which is 'a curious Jainistic adaptation and extension of the Nala episode of the *Mahābhārata*'. The famous *Kumārapāla-pratibodha* of Somaprabha, a younger contemporary of Hemacandra and King Kumārapāla, gives the story of Nala as a warning against gambling. The *Pañcaśatī-prabodha-sambandha* of Śubhaśīla Gaṇin (written in A.D. 1464) deals, among others, with the stories of Draupadī and Kuntī. Śubhaśīla Gaṇin wrote also the *Bharatādi-kathā*. Amitagati (eleventh century A.D.) cites many legends and sagas from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* in a corrupt Jaina form.

The Jains 'incorporated the Kṛṣṇa cult into their religion at a very early period and consequently also interwove the Kṛṣṇa legend with their own treasury of legends'. The Prakrit work *Vāsudeva-hiṇḍī* of Saṅghadāsa Gaṇin and Jinadāsa (*c*. sixth or seventh century A.D.) partly deals with the story of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. The eighth Aṅga, Aṁtagaḍadasāö, gives a corrupted Jaina version of the Kṛṣṇa legend where the 'story of the downfall of the city of Dvārāvatī and the death of Kṛṣṇa is told as in the *Mahābhārata*, only Kṛṣṇa is made into a pious Jina'.

INFLUENCE OF THE MAHABHARATA ON MODERN INDIAN LITERATURE

Assamese: Rāma Sarasvatī (sixteenth century A.D.) translated the *Mahābhārata* into Assamese at the request of King Naranārāyaṇa of Cooch-Behar, introducing many new incidents and episodes. He took the fullest freedom in the *Vanaparvan*. Rāma Sarasvatī wrote also such other works as *Kulācala-vadha*, *Bagāsura-vadha*, and *Bhīma-carita*, where the popular hero has been most picturesquely drawn as a big and tall glutton always carrying his club with him. *Babrubāhanar Yuddha* by Harihara Vipra (later part of the thirteenth century A.D.) is based on an episode in the *Aśvamedhaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. It is composed in verse and contains about 600 couplets. Mādhava Deva, disciple of Śaṅkara Deva, wrote also the *Rājasūya-yajña* which is based on a famous *Mahābhārata* episode. Ananta Kandalī, a contemporary of Śaṅkara Deva, wrote the *Bhārata-Sāvitrī*. Gopīnātha Pāṭhaka wrote the *Droṇa-* and the *Puṣpa-parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*. Sūryakhari Daivajña (early nineteenth century A.D.) wrote the *Kūrmāvali-vadha* and the *Khaṭāsura-vadha*, both adaptations from the *Mahābhārata*. Ramakanta Chaudhary wrote the *Abhimanyu-vadha-kāvya* (published in A.D. 1875). The plots of many modern dramas and other writings have been taken from the two epics.

Bengali: The earliest *Mahābhārata* in Bengali was written in the sixteenth century A.D. by Kavīndra Parameśvara at the command of Parāgal Khān, a high Muslim official (Laskar) of Chittagong. The work is styled as *Pāṇḍava-vijaya*. In the same century Śrīkara Nandin wrote his *Aśvamedhaparvan*, based on the *Jaiminī-Bhārata*, at the command of Chuṭi Khān, son of Parāgal Khān. The most popular *Mahābhārata* in Bengali was, however, composed by Kāśīrāma Dāsa in the seventeenth century A.D. Kāśīrāma died before he could complete even the *Virāṭaparvan*. The work was completed by Nandarāma, a distant nephew of Kāśīrāma. The *Mahābhārata* of Kāśīrāma, along with the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivāsa, are two of the greatest works in Bengali literature. There have been scores of poets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who have translated only one or two *parvans*, especially the *Virāṭa* or *Aśvamedha*, of the *Mahābhārata* into Bengali. In A.D. 1546-47 Pītāmbara Dāsa wrote the *Nala-Damayantī-ākhyāna* and Rājendra Dāsa, the *Śakuntalā*. The two prose translations of the *Mahābhārata*, published respectively under the patronage of the Maharaja of Burdwan and Kaliprasanna Sinha, are most valuable treasures of Bengali literature. The latter work was published between A.D. 1858 and 1866, and both were distributed free. Girish Chandra Ghosh wrote such plays as *Abhimanyu-vadha* (A.D. 1881), *Pāṇḍaver Ajñātavāsa* (A.D. 1882), and *Pāṇḍava-gaurava* (A.D. 1900), which are based on *Mahābhārata* episodes. Tagore's famous lyrical drama *Citrāṅgadā* (A.D. 1892) is based on the

episode of Arjuna's marriage with Citrāṅgadā, a princess of Manipur. Tagore also wrote several narrative poems: *Kaca o Devayānī*, *Gāndhārīr Āvedan* (The Appeal of Gāndhārī), *Karṇa-Kuntī-saṁvād*, etc. which are based on the *Mahābhārata*. Nabin Chandra Sen's trilogy *Kurukṣetra* (A.D. 1893), *Raivataka* (1896), and *Prabhāsa* (1896), has the Mahābhāratan war and later incidents in Lord Kṛṣṇa's life as its background, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*, as its hero; Rajashekhar Basu's abridged Bengali version of the *Mahābhārata*, like that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is another valuable contribution to Bengali literature.

Gujarati: Nākara (*c*. A.D. 1550) is probably the earliest author who attempted a rendering of some parts of the *Mahābhārata* in Gujarati. He did not follow the original faithfully. Premānanda, the author of the Gujarati *Rāmāyaṇa*, composed a complete version of the *Mahābhārata* also. His *Candrahāsākhyāna* (A.D. 1671), *Draupadī-svayaṁvara* (A.D. 1680), *Nalākhyāna* (A.D. 1685), *Draupadī-haraṇa* (A.D. 1689), and *Subhadrā-haraṇa* (A.D. 1702), are based on *Mahābhārata* episodes. His *Nalākhyāna* is the most popular of his *ākhyānas*, and every line of the work 'testifies to the touch of a skilled artist'. Bhālaṇa (*c*. fifteenth century A.D.), who may be called the 'father' of the *ākhyānas* in Gujarati, wrote the *Nalākhyāna* and the *Durvāsākhyāna*. Premānanda's son Vallabha wrote the *Duḥśāsana-rudhira-pānākhyāna* (A.D. 1742), the *Kuntī-prasannākhyāna* (A.D. 1781), the *Yudhiṣṭhira-Vṛkodarākhyāna*, etc. Ratneśvara, the most notable pupil of Premānanda, wrote the *Śiśupāla-vadha*. Sāmaḷabhaṭṭa (eighteenth century A.D.) wrote the *Rāvaṇa-Mandodarī-saṁvāda* and the *Draupadī-vastra-haraṇa*. In modern times, Nanalal (born in A.D. 1877), is 'the most outstanding poet of the new literature', and he has written an epic entitled *Kurukṣetra*. The *Rekhā-caritra* of Lilavati Munshi (born in A.D. 1899) contains a fine sketch of Draupadī. Batubhai Lalbhai Umarvadia (born in A.D. 1899) has collected some one-act plays in his *Matsyagandhā āṇe Gāṅgeya* (A.D. 1925).

Hindi: Sabal Singh Chauhān (*c*. A.D. 1670), who belonged to a ruling house, wrote an abridged Hindi version of the *Mahābhārata* in about 24,000 verses. Though without much literary merit, it is very popular because of its simple style. Sūr Dās (*c*. sixteenth century A.D.), the famous saint and 'blind bard of Agra', composed, besides many other works and devotional songs, a work on the story of Nala and Damayantī in Hindi. Chatra (flourished about A.D. 1700) is the author of the *Vijai Muktāvalī* which is an abstract of the *Mahābhārata* in Hindi verse. Gokul Nāth (eighteenth-nineteenth century A.D.) is the celebrated translator of the *Mahābhārata* into Hindi. Maithili Sharan Gupta (born in A.D. 1886) has written a long narrative poem entitled *Jayadratha-vadha*.

Kannada: Pampa I (*c*. A.D. 902), is the celebrated author of the

Kannada *Mahābhārata* entitled *Vikramārjuna-vijaya*, also known as *Pampa-Bhārata* or *Samasta-Bhārata*. The work is a masterly abridgement of the original work and maintains 'a high level in narration, characterization, and poetry' and gives the Jaina version of the story. Ranna, the third member of the trio Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna, wrote the *Sāhasa-Bhīma-vijaya* describing the final fight of Bhīma and Duryodhana. Karṇapārya (*c.* A.D. 1140) managed to introduce the stories of Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas, and the Mahābhāratan war in his *Nemīnātha Purāṇa* which is a history of the twenty-second Tīrthaṅkara. Nāraṇappa (sixteenth century A.D.), better known by his *nom de plume* Kumāra Vyāsa, composed the Kannada version of the first ten *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*. The remaining *parvans* were translated by Timmaṇṇa, whose work was named *Kṛṣṇarāya-Bhārata* after his royal patron. Two other versions of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Lakṣmakavi-Bhārata* and the *Śālva-Bhārata*, were written in the century by Lakṣmakavi and Śālva respectively. The latter work gives the Jaina version of the story. Kanaka Dāsa (sixteenth century A.D.), a hunter by caste, wrote, amongst others, the *Nala-carita* in *ṣaṭpadī metre*. Lakṣmīśa (*c.* first half of the eighteenth century A.D.) wrote his famous work, the *Jaiminī-Bhārata* describing the wanderings of the sacrificial horse of Yudhiṣṭhira. Though based on the *Aśvamedhaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, it differs widely from the original in details. It is one of the most highly esteemed poems in Kannada. A prose version of the *Mahābhārata* entitled *Kṛṣṇarāja-vāṇīvilāsa* was made in the nineteenth century under the patronage of Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar III (A.D. 1799-1868). The *Yakṣagānas*, which are in 'a dramatic form suitable for recitation before rustic audiences by professional or amateur actors', are based on the epics and the Purāṇas. Shantayya, a Brāhmaṇa of Gersappe, wrote a large number of such works in the nineteenth century A.D. Many dramatic works of a high order written in Kannada are also based on the epics.

Malayalam: Ezhuttaccan, the author of the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* in Malayalam, also composed a condensed version of the *Mahābhārata* which is his best literary work. His adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* 'form the basis of every Malayalee's education'. In the *genre* of Kathakali literature, the *Nala-caritram* of Uṇṇayi Wariar and the *Uttarā-svayaṁvaram* and *Kīcaka-vadham* of Erayimman Thampi deserve special mention for their literary excellence. Amongst modern works (dramas) in Malayalam based on the *Mahābhārata*, we may mention the *Subhadrār-junam* by Thottakattu Ikkavamma, *Karṇan* by N. P. Chellappan Nair, *Ambā*, dealing with the tragic story of a character of that name in the *Mahābhārata*, by Mahākavi Ulloor, *Bhīṣmar* by K. M. Panikkar, and the pastoral elegy *Devayānī* by Changanpuzha Krishna Pillai.

Marathi: Mukteśvara, the author of a *Rāmāyaṇa*, won great fame by his Marathi adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* in verse. 'It is a product of ripe learning and long experience and he must have composed it when he was advanced in years, about the year 1650 A.D.' The work is written in the simple *ovī* metre; 'the style is dignified and chaste and the vein of narration smooth'. The most popular *Mahābhārata* in Marathi, however, is the *Pāṇḍava-pratāpa* of Śrīdhara, the author of the *Rāma-vijaya*. It consists of about 13,000 couplets in *ovī* metre. Moropant, the author of 108 *Rāmāyaṇas*, also wrote a *Mahābhārata* in Marathi. Śubhānanda (late eighteenth century A.D.) has adapted portions of the *Mahābhārata* in *ovī* metre. The *Damayantī-svayaṁvara* or *Nalopākhyāna* by Raghunātha Paṇḍita is 'one of the most charming and excellent poetical works in Marathi'. It is, however, modelled on the *Naiṣadha-carita* of Śrīharṣa. The *Durvāsā-yātrā*, *Draupadī-vastra-haraṇa*, etc. of Anantarāya (born in A.D. 1698), are composed in easy-flowing, sweet *kaṭibandhas* or *kaṭāvas*, as these are more popularly known. Anna Kirloskar's *Śākuntala* and *Saubhadra*, Khadilkar's *Draupadī*, Panta Pratinidhi's *Draupadī-vastra-haraṇa* and *Bhīṣma-pratijñā*, Sarnaik's *Draupadī-svayaṁvara*, Kane's *Nala-Damayantī* and Raghunath Pandit's *Nala-Damayantī-svayaṁvara* are some of the modern works based on the *Mahābhārata*. Chiplunkar's .prose translation of the complete *Mahābhārata* is a noteworthy contribution to the Marathi literature.

Oriya: Sarala Dāsa, an illiterate cultivator absolutely innocent of Sanskrit, wrote the first *Mahābhārata* in Oriya in the fourteenth century A.D. As he had no direct access to the original, he got the outline of the epic story probably from the priests. The original epic has undergone many changes in his hands—even the order of the eighteen *parvans* does not exist in his work. The characters have been much modified by him and 'are no more than the Oriyas of the contemporary world which alone the poet knew'. He even brings the Pāṇḍavas to Orissa on their way to heaven and makes Yudhiṣṭhira marry the daughter of a village merchant to save her from a curse! Although a few more versions of the great epic have been made in Oriya, Sarala Dāsa's work still enjoys the greatest popularity with the masses of Orissa. Viśvambhara Dāsa wrote the *Vicitra-Mahābhārata* (late seventeenth or early eighteenth century A.D.). Rājā Kṛṣṇasiṁha's *Mahābhārata* (eighteenth century A.D.) is next only to Sarala Dāsa's work in popularity. Bhīma Dhīvara's *Bhārata Sāvitrī* gives the whole story of the *Mahābhārata* and his *Kapaṭapāśā* in verse is based on the episode of the game of dice. Gopīnātha Dāsa wrote the *Ṭīkā-Mahābhārata* in the seventeenth century A.D. Amongst modern works based on the episodes from the *Mahābhārata* mention may be made of Radhanath Ray's *Duryodhanara*

Raktanadī-santaraṇa and *Bāṇa-haraṇa* (both *kāvyas*) and Radhamohan Rajendra Dev's *Pāñcālī-paṭṭāpaharaṇa* (drama).

Tamil: Peruṇdevanār, who, according to some, belongs to the Sangam period of Tamil literature and is assigned by others to the tenth century A.D., translated the *Mahābhārata* into Tamil. In the second and third decades of the present century M. V. Ramanujachariyar has made a complete and literal prose translation of the *Mahābhārata* in Tamil. C. Rajagopalachari's adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* entitled *Viyāsar Virundu* is a masterly and popular work which has been translated into English. Subrahmanya Bharatiyar's *Pāñjāliyin Śapatam* is a noteworthy work in the sense that it condemns the Pāṇḍavas in their incident with Kīcaka.

Telugu: The first literary work extant in Telugu is the *Mahābhārata* by Nannaya (eleventh century A.D.). This work is not a literal translation of the *Mahābhārata*. Nannaya wrote only the first two and half *parvans*. His poetry is chaste and dignified. In the thirteenth century A.D. Tikkana wrote the last fifteen *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*. But curiously enough he did not complete the unfinished third *parvan*. It was Yerrapragada who completed it in the fourteenth century A.D. Pillalmarri Pinavīrabhadriah wrote the Telugu version of the *Jaiminī-Bhārata* and the *Śṛṅgāra-Śākuntalam* in the fifteenth century A.D. The *Mahābhārata* dramas written by Tirupati Shastri and Venkata Shastri in modern times are most interesting. Mahāmahopādhyāya Krishnamurti Shastri has published a metrical translation of the *Mahābhārata* also.

INFLUENCE OF THE EPICS ON INDIAN LIFE AND CULTURE

From the foregoing account of epic derivatives in classical and regional literature, it is very easy to imagine how profound the epic influence must have been on art and culture, and on the general texture of social life. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are, in the words of Havell, 'as much the common property of all Hinduism as the English Bible and Shakespeare belong to all English-speaking people. The Indian epics contain a portrait-gallery of ideal types of men and women which afford to every good Hindu the highest examplars of moral conduct, and every Hindu artist an inexhaustible mine of subject matter.' The earliest specimens of the influence of the epics on Indian art and sculpture date from the Gupta period. The platform of the Daśāvatāra temple (dating about A.D. 600) at Deogarh in Jhansi was 'decorated with a continuous frieze representing events from the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*'. Panels depicting *Rāmāyaṇa* subjects were quite common in the Gupta Age. The sculptures of the great Virūpākṣa temple of Paṭṭadakal, dating from about A.D. 740 and belonging to the early Cālukya period, represent, among others, *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes. Episodes

from the *Rāmāyaṇa* almost entirely clothe the famous rock-cut Kailāsa temple at Ellora (eighth century A.D.). The most 'dramatic' of a number of such reliefs is one illustrating the well-known legend of Rāvaṇa's shaking Mt. Kailāsa which occurs in the *Uttara-kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Another fine relief-panel of the Kailāsa temple represents the Gaṅgāvataraṇa, or the Descent of the Gaṅgā on the earth. Some other mediaeval temples depicting *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are: the temple of Āeśvara (eleventh century A.D.) at Sinnar near Nasik, the great temple of Gondeśvara, or Govindeśvara, (twelfth century A.D.) also at Sinnar, the basement of the unfinished Hoysaleśvara temple at Haḷebīḍ, the Hazār Rām temple at Vijayanagar (early sixteenth century A.D.), the temple group of Osia in Rajasthan, etc. Separate cult images of Rāma, accompanied by those of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanūmat, in stone and bronze are abundantly found from a comparatively late period.

The Gupta pillars from Chandimau have scenes from the Kirātārjuna episode of the *Mahābhārata*. Many Gupta lintels also represent *Mahābhārata* scenes. Arjuna's penance was engraved in a bas-relief on pillars from Rajaona, Monghyr District, Bihar, during the Gupta period. But the most famous representation of a *Mahābhārata* scene, namely, Arjuna's penance (which, however, is identified by some as Gaṅgāvataraṇa scene), is to be found in the rock-sculpture at Māmallapuram (or Mahābalipuram). This 'huge relief picture, covering a sheet of rock ninety-six feet in length and forty-three in breadth' can rightly be regarded as 'the greatest achievement of the Pallava sculptures'. The legend of the churning of the ocean by the gods and Asuras, which allegorically represents 'the great cosmic struggle between good and evil', is a very favourite subject with Indian sculptors and painters.

Various mediaeval schools of Indian paintings, Rājput, Kāṅgrā, etc. have pictures depicting Arjuna's adventures, the legend of Nala and Damayantī and other *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* scenes. A Cochin mural of the seventeenth century A.D. vividly represents the scene of friendship of Rāma and Sugrīva. The Jammu school of painting has a 'well-known series of unusually large *Rāmāyaṇa* pictures, dealing with the siege of Laṅkā'. The Persian adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* entitled *Razmnāmā* (sixteenth century A.D.) has a set of 169 beautiful miniatures depicting *Mahābhārata* scenes. Amongst famous modern artists, Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Basu, and others have illustrated many scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* portray pictures of ideal men and women, and preach through a popular medium the gospel of Bhārata-Dharma. The *Rāmāyaṇa* does this by glorifying domestic relations and

family life 'sustaining the entire social structure', and the *Mahābhārata*, by its lesson 'that hatred breeds hatred, that covetousness and violence lead inevitably to ruin, that the only real conquest is the battle against one's lower nature'. Rāma represents an ideal son and king, a perfect Man, Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata ideal brothers, Sītā an ideal wife, a perfect Woman, Hanūmat an ideal devotee, Yudhiṣṭhira an ideal upholder of moral virtues, and Bhīṣma and Arjuna ideal heroes. Parents and elders have for generations used the themes and stories of the epics for imparting wisdom and instruction to the younger generation. The themes are at once appealing and entertaining, and they create an indelible impression on the young minds; every incident and story (and the moral going with it) become deeply engraved thereon. The educative influence of the epics on an Indian further is sustained through all the stages of life by such means as mass recitations of the epics in the temple, or in public on festive and other occasions (the earliest reference to which is found in Kumāralāta's *Kalpanā-maṇḍitikā*, a work of second century A.D.), and by such open-air popular performances as the *Rāma-līlā* and *Bhārata-līlā*, *yātrās* and *Pālāgānas*, *Yakṣagānas* and *Daśāvatāras*, dances like the *Kathakali* and *Pāṇḍava-nṛtya*, and regular dramatic performances—these are entertainments which always attract vast and varied crowds, irrespective of creed or faith, and they are an evidence of the perennial and dynamic appeal of the epics to all. To millions of Hindus it has been a religious duty to recite at least a few verses from the epics before taking their meals.

Works which have affected so large a population over so long a period of time and moulded the character and civilization of so vast a region, often transcending geographical limits, can ill afford to be termed mere 'epics'. Indeed, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* should better be regarded as the *true history of India*, history not of events, but of the urges and aspirations, strivings and purposes of the nation. Encyclopaedic in nature, together they form 'the content of our collective unconscious' wherein breathe 'the united soul of India and the individual souls of her people'. The two epics represent the two 'moods of our Aryan civilization', viz. moral and intellectual, and it is, indeed, impossible to grasp the true spirit and meaning behind 'the moving drama of Indian life' without a thorough and intelligent understanding of the epics. 'And to trace the influence of the Indian epics on the life and civilization of the nation, and on the development of the modern languages, literatures, and religious reforms', in the words of R. C. Dutt, 'is to comprehend the real history of the people during the three thousand years'. The epics have thus been the 'deep well of strength' to our forefathers, from which *they*

derived—and which inspires *us* to derive—the 'enduring vitality' of our cultural and spiritual basis as well as of our social and political life.

'Glory to the twin poets whose names are lost in the morass of time, but whose message brings strength and peace in a thousand streams to the doors of millions of men and women even to this day, and incessantly carries silt from long-past centuries and keeps fresh and fertile the soul of India.'[3]—Rabindranath Tagore.

[3] From the original in Bengali.

8

THE RĀMĀYAṆA AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

THE RĀMĀYANA

THE Rāma tradition has followed in the wake of Indian colonizing activities and has spread all over south-eastern Asia. The deeds of Rāma are still represented in the puppet shows of Burma. In Siam, the king is an incarnation of Rāma. One of the recent kings was named Rāma VI. Rāma's capital is localized as the old capital Ayuthia (Ayodhyā) of Siam. Lopburi (Lavapurī) is one of the most ancient towns in Siam. The oldest Siamese inscription is that of Rāma Kamheng, who founded the Siamese kingdom on the ruins of the Khmer empire. The writer of this paper has seen representations of scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* worked in silver on the gates of the principal Buddhist temple (Vat Chetu Pon) of Bangkok. In a sixth century inscription of Cambodia there is the following passage: 'With the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Purāṇa he (the Brāhmaṇa Somaśarman) gave a complete *Mahābhārata* and arranged for a daily recitation without interruption.... Whoever participates in this reading—may a portion of the fruit of this great and virtuous act go to his credit. . . .'[1] The princes of Kambuja (Cambodia as distinguished from the older kingdom of Funan) traced their descent from the solar dynasty. In an inscription[2] of Yaśovarman (A.D. 889-909), the construction of the new capital of Yaśodharapura (Angkor Thom) is thus referred to in words having double meaning: 'He who defended Kambupurī (the capital of Kambuja), impregnable (Ayodhyā), of terrifying aspect (Bibhīṣaṇa), with the aid of good counsellors (with Sumantra as his friend) and with prosperity (Sītā) as its ornament, like the descendant of Raghu'.

THE RĀMA BAS-RELIEFS

The Hema-śṛṅga-giri, at present known as Ba Puon, was constructed by Jayavarman V of Kambuja (A.D. 968-1001) and is one of the finest pyramidal temples of Cambodia. Among the Rāma bas-reliefs, found on the walls of its highest gallery, may be mentioned the interview of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Sugrīva, the duel between Sugrīva and Vālin, Sītā in the grove of Aśoka trees handing over the jewel to Hanūmat, battle scenes in which Hanūmat plays the chief part, the ten-headed Rāvana in

[1] Inscription of Veal Kantel, *Inscriptions Sanscrites de Champa et du Cambodge*, p. 30.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 505 (st. 21).

the *Serat Rāma*, and the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, without following Vālmīki verbatim, gives, on the whole, the orthodox Indian version.

The second group is represented by the *Rāma Kling*, the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, and other less known works such as the *Rāmāyaṇa Sasak* and *Rāma Nitis*. This group closely approaches the Malay version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Malay *Hikāyat Serī Rām*[8] is probably based on this second group of Javanese texts. In popular dramas still staged for entertainment, it is this second group, and not the first, which serves as the theme. These pieces for the theatre have been based on the episodes of the Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa*, such as the birth of Daśamukha (Rāvaṇa), his abduction of a *vidyādharī* (Indrajit is there represented as her son), and Rāma's marriage. The old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇas* (the *Kākāwin* etc.) are sometimes quoted in these dramatical representations, but nobody understands them. The first group of works noted above had only a superficial influence over the growth of the Rāma tradition in Java.

THE SERAT KĀṆḌA

The *Serat Kāṇḍa* begins with Adam in Mecca along with his sons, Abil and Kabil, and Satan; then we get a curious association of Noah and Umā. We come next to the account of the birth of Viṣṇu and that of Vāsuki, and Muslim figures then disappear. The genealogy of early Javanese kings is worked into the story. The *Rāmāyaṇa* begins with canto XXII and only in canto XLVI the birth of Rāma is given. In cantos XXIII to XLV the ancestors of Rāma and Rāvaṇa are discussed, some among them are ancestors of Javanese princes. In this work, Rāma is called Bhārgava, Lakṣmaṇa Murdhaka, and Sītā Sintā; Janaka is Kāla and Jaṭāyu Jintaya, Hanūmat is Anumān; the last one is presented as the son of Rāma and Sītā, born when both of them were temporarily metamorphosed into apes; he lost his tail, which he recovered in the sea of sand.

Just at the point when the invasion of Laṅkā is to begin, the author digresses into the story of the Pāṇḍavas. In canto LXX, the story of Rāma is again taken up. Then the sequel to Rāvaṇa's death is related; Rāvaṇa is buried under a mountain. Then follows the episode of the fan with Rāvaṇa's picture on it, which Sītā unwittingly handles. This leads to estrangement between Rāma and Sītā. The couple are however reconciled at the hermitage of Kāla (Janaka). Towards the end, we have the marriage of the daughter of Indrajit with But-Lava (Lava). Dinjayapura

[8] Translated in the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 70, April 1917.

is mentioned as the capital of Lava. Finally Sītā consents to be cremated with Rāma on condition that in the next life she would be his sister.

The difference between the concluding portion of the *Serat Kāṇḍa* and Vālmīki's *Uttarakāṇḍa* is so great that the former must be ascribed to a different source altogether. Dr. Stutterheim believes that other versions besides that of Vālmīki may have been at the basis of these Javanese divergences. The fame of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* has made us forget that there were also other (formerly well-known) accounts of the life of Rāma. In the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, there is firstly a combination of Mohammedan tales and of the deeds of Rāma. In canto III, Śiva is mentioned as a descendant of Adam. In the Malay version, the Muslim element is more conspicuous. Secondly in the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, the story of Rāma forms an organic whole with early legends of Javanese dynasties. These Javanese texts of the second group may be taken as Javanese *purāṇas* working up local legends with orthodox Indian traditions.

THE MALAY RĀMAYAṆA

Regarding the Malay *Rāmāyaṇa*, Dr. Brandes believes that a great part of it consists of old native legends which have nothing to do with the story of Rāma. The best known manuscript of this work was written late in the sixteenth century. It came into the possession of Archbishop Laud and was passed on to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in 1633.[a] It is evidently based on the Javanese Rāma legends of the second group. The narration begins with this account: Rāvaṇa is banished by his father, put on board a ship, and finds himself at last in Serandip (Ceylon). He leads the rigorous life of an ascetic for twelve years, at the end of which Adam appears before him. Rāvaṇa requests Adam to intercede for him; and then we get what appears to be a strangely distorted account of the familiar story of Rāma.

The questions arise: How far are these differences local in origin? Can they be traced to different versions of the Rāma tradition in India itself? In the Malay version, Daśaratha's first wife is found in a bamboo thicket, and according to the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, the second wife is also found in a bamboo grove. In Indian folk-lore also, there are some instances of deviations like this, and they may not therefore be of Indonesian origin. The part which Balia Dari (Kaikeyī) plays in the Malay version is different from that which she plays in the Indian *Rāmāyaṇa*. She holds up with her hand Daśaratha's litter when it was breaking. In the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, also there is mention of the breaking of the litter, in addition to Kaikeyī's healing the wounds of Daśaratha. In the Malay version,

[a] *Ibid.*

Rāma, when he was quite young, is represented as teasing a hunch-backed woman (Mantharā). In Kṣemendra's *Rāmāyaṇa-mañjarī*, it is mentioned that Rāma's rough treatment of Mantharā led her to act against him.

DEVIATIONS IN THE DESCRIPTION OF SITA

Again, in the Malay version and in the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, Sītā is apparently Rāvaṇa's daughter by Mandodarī; really in both of these works she is the daughter of Daśaratha and Mandodarī. As soon as she is born, she is put in a box and thrown into the sea. Janaka (Kāla in Javanese) finds the box while he is performing his morning ablutions, takes out Sītā from it, and brings her up. In the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*, Nārada curses Lakṣmī that she will be born as a *rākṣasī*. In the Siamese version also, Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaṇa. In a Ceylonese tale, Sītā is born of the blood of ascetics collected by Rāvaṇa[7]. In the *Uttara Purāṇa* of the Jains also, Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaṇa. Nearest to the Malay version, there is a folk-tale from Gujarat,[8] in which a certain man's daughter is placed in a box and put into the sea. The box floats down to a fisherman's hut, and later on, the father of the girl comes to win her hand in marriage. In the Malay version (in the manuscript of Eysinga, and not that of Laud), we find Lakṣmaṇa leading an ascetic life, without sleeping or partaking of any food, for twelve years, just as in the Bengali version of Kṛttivāsa. According to the Malay version, Lakṣmaṇa draws charm circle round Sītā's dwelling place before he leaves her to help Rāma who was supposed to be in distress. Kṛttivāsa also gives this description in his popular poem. The abduction of Rāma into Pātāla (the underground world) occurs in the Malay version as well as in the Bengali and Gujarati popular *Rāmāyaṇas*. In a Punjab story, it is stated that Macchandanātha is the son of Hanūmat by a fish-queen, whom the monkey chief weds on his visit to Pātāla in quest of Rāma. A son of Hanūmat by a princess of subterranean regions is mentioned in the Malay accounts.

Most of the divergences in the Javanese and Malay accounts of the *Laṅkākāṇḍa* can probably be deduced from Indian sources. In the Malay version, Rāvaṇa falls when Rāma shoots off his small head (he had ten heads) behind his right ear. Then again, it says that Rāvaṇa is immortal. Mention of this is found also in popular Bengali accounts. The episode of the fan with Rāvaṇa's picture, referred to in the *Serat Kāṇḍa*, occurs in the Bengali tale of Candrāvali, where the same story is told of Kaikeyī's daughter Kukua.[9] Kuśa, the Ceylonese and the Malay versions say, was

[7] *IA*, XLV. p. 84. I have heard this tale in the hills of the Kangra District.
[8] *IA*, XXII. p. 315.
[9] D. C. Sen, *Lectures on Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 197 ff.

created out of Kuśa grass by Vālmīki when the real child was missing. The account of the fight between Rāma and his sons (without their knowing each other) is current in Bengal and the Malay Archipelago.

In what relation do these variations stand to Vālmīki's epic? Some of these variant stories may be older than the epic itself, and certainly they are cruder; e.g. the narration in some of the earlier versions that Sītā is really Rāvaṇa's daughter. In the Malay *Hikāyat Seri Rāma* and *Serat Kāṇḍa*, she is Rāvaṇa's daughter only apparently. In Vālmīki's epic, there is no relationship between Rāvaṇa and Sītā. Sītā's story has been adapted, according to Dr. Stutterheim, to the stage of civilization reached at the particular period of the transmission of the story. Therefore he thinks that instead of accusing the Javanese of having tampered with the Rāma tradition to suit their own outlook on life, one may level the same charge against Vālmīki himself for having given us a refined version of the earlier and cruder accounts.

MIXED INFLUENCE OF ORAL TRADITIONS

At first it was supposed by some of the Dutch scholars that the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* might have been the basis of the Javanese and Malay versions. But the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kamban follows Vālmīki closely. The popular tales in the Indonesian, as also in the Javanese, Malay, and the remaining versions, approach closely some of the popular versions current in Gujarat, Punjab, and Bengal. A tradition still existing in Java ascribes the colonization of the island by emigrants from Gujarat. This is probably due to the fact that from the thirteenth century the Gujaratis were in Java as merchants, mullahs, and sailors. Epigraphic evidence does not support the tradition of any Gujarati influence in earlier times, and as the sole reason for the divergences in the Indonesian *Rāmāyaṇa*, the influence of the Gujarati versions cannot be maintained.

Dr. Stutterheim thus sums up his conclusions on this question: No single definite recension has yet been found in India from which the Indonesian (Javanese and Malay) versions could have been derived. There has been a very mixed influence, principally of oral traditions, some of which have come down from very ancient times. Vālmīki's work, according to Dr. Stutterheim, represents a later and more refined civilization. The Javanese and Malay versions, which preserve some of the more primitive traditions, should be more interesting from the anthropological point of view than the literary and polished *Rāmāyaṇa* of the orthodox school.

The Rāma tradition is a living force even in the Java of today. 'The Javanese have so completely assimilated the famous legends that even their foreign origin has been forgotten. For the great mass of the population,

Rāma and Pāṇḍavas are truly national heroes, born and bred in the Isle of Java! The extreme favour which those Indian stories have found and retained until now among all classes of society, is not so much due to their having been sung in famous old Javanese poems, as to that most popular of entertainments—the Wayang or the shadow-show. Indians familiar with their *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* would be surprised to see Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma appear here in the quaint garb of Wayang puppets, which in their strangely fantastical, yet unmistakably artistic character, are the true children of Indonesian art. Stranger still are the clowns who invariably accompany the hero, be it Arjuna or Rāma, and who contribute not a little to the delight of the audience by their good-humoured, though not always delicate, jokes. These clowns or *panakawans*—Semar, the father, and his two sons, Petruk and Nalagareng—are undoubtedly as Indonesian in origin as they are in name.'[10] The principal river of Central Java is still known as the Serayu, and sounds similar to Sarayū on which Ayodhyā was located.

THE PRAMBANAN GROUP OF HINDU TEMPLES

Next to the Borobudur, the most striking ancient monument in Java is the Prambanan group of Hindu temples. The ruins of Prambanan are part of a still bigger group of dilapidated shrines known as Chandi (Javanese word for a temple) Laura Jongrong. The princess Laura Jongrong is well known in Javanese folk-lore. It was to win her hand, so says the popular story, that the thousand temples of Chandi Sewn, in the vicinity of Prambanan were built, in a single night, by a suitor, according to a wager; he was however frustrated in his purpose by an unusually early dawn. These Hindu shrines are situated in the plain dominated by the volcano Merapi. The Archaeological Society of Jogyakarta—the nearest important town—commenced in A.D. 1885 the task of clearing up the tropical vegetation and the lava deposits under which the shrines had been buried for centuries. This work of restoration had an unexpected result: The Javanese, converted to Islam three centuries ago, thronged to visit the temple with offerings of incense and flowers. The French traveller Jules Leclercq, who saw even Hajis joining in this worship of the ancient Hindu images, remarks that the advent of the Muslim faith has not alienated the minds of the Javanese from their old beliefs.[11]

The Laura Jongrong group of temples is surrounded on all sides by Buddhist shrines. There are eight main temples in this group, and those dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā are in the middle. The general

[10] Vogel, The Relation between the Art of India and Java (*The Influence of Indian Art*, p. 40).

[11] *L'ile de Java*, p. 147.

plan is grand in its simplicity. The eight large main shrines are built on a square terrace in the centre, round which are 160 small shrines arranged in three successive squares. The small shrines are now in an advanced state of decay; but the main temples have resisted better the ravages of time.

Inscriptions of the Buddhist Śailendra kings cease to appear in Central Java after the middle of the ninth century. After A.D. 915, we do not hear any more of Central Javanese rulers, this region being abandoned by them at that time. So the Prambanan group must have been constructed in the second half of the ninth century by a prince known by the name Dakṣa. An inscription of Prambanan mentions this name. On the inner side of the balustrade of the Śiva temple, are the famous *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs. From the outside, one cannot see anything of these splendid representations. The bas-reliefs in the Śiva temple stop abruptly with the scene of bridging the sea. Probably the story was continued along the balustrade of the adjoining Brahmā temple, some scattered remnants of which have been discovered. There are Kṛṣṇa reliefs on the parapet of the Viṣṇu temple.

The first bas-reliefs of the *Rāmāyaṇa* series begins at the starting point of the *pradakṣiṇa* (going round) of the Śiva's shrine. Here we have Garuḍa with the blue lotus, Viṣṇu reclining on the Śeṣa-Nāga, drifting on the sea which is full of crabs and fishes, and to the right a group of seated figures headed by an ascetic who offers something to Viṣṇu. Dr. Vogel says about this first relief: 'It is interesting that this opening scene of the Rāma story differs from the version both of the Sanskrit and the old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* (the *Kākāwin*), but agrees in a remarkable way with the corresponding passage in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa*. In the tenth canto of *Raghuvaṁśa*, the gods led by the *Ṛṣi* Bhṛgu, invoke Viṣṇu in the midst of the waters of the ocean.'

In the following scenes, are depicted the visit of Viśvāmitra to the court of Daśaratha, Tāṭakā (or Tāḍakā) and another giantess being shot down with arrows by Rāma, the interview with Janaka, Sītā's *svayaṁvara*, the breaking of the bow, Paraśurāma wearing an *akṣamālā* (rosary of beads) facing Rāma and Sītā, Kaikeyī talking to Daśaratha about the festive preparations—there are green cocoanuts and a pot kept for auspicious purpose (*maṅgala kalaśa*) in the background—a woman with a sword and a shield in her hands, dancing a war dance before two princes, and Daśaratha in a melancholy attitude with Kauśalyā behind him. This is followed by a forest scene with three crowned figures in a four-wheeled chariot drawn by a pair of horses—Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa leaving for the forest. In the next scene, we find a group of workmen; one of them is placing a richly

ornamented chest on an altar. Other servants, all with woolly hair like negroes, are apparently busy with some preparations. A lady is sitting with three money-bags in front of her. Can this be the *śrāddha* ceremony after Daśaratha's death? After this there is the scene in which Rāma hands over his sandals to Bharata, his combat with Virādha and another *rākṣasa* (there is a house on a wooden pile in the background), Rāma punishing the crow for vexing Sītā, the visit of Śūrpaṇakhā, Rāma shooting the golden deer, Sītā being abducted by Rāvaṇa disguised as a Brāhmaṇa, Rāvaṇa's struggle with Jaṭāyu (Rāvaṇa and Sītā are here carried on a platform which a winged demon bears on his head), Sītā giving a ring to the wounded Jaṭāyu, Jaṭāyu handing over the ring to Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma shooting Kabandha (who has one head on his shoulders and a second one in his belly), and Kabandha going to heaven seated on a lotus. The scene in the next relief represents a prince shooting an arrow at a crocodile in a tank and a lady represented on the bank of it in the attitude of prayer. Can this be an allusion to the Śabarī episode on the bank of the Pampā lake? In the scene which comes after that the meeting with Hanūmat is depicted. This was the first relief discovered and led to the whole series being identified with the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In the next scene, Sugrīva is seen weeping on a tree. His tears are flowing into Lakṣmaṇa's quiver. In the Malay version, Lakṣmaṇa brings water for Rāma in his quiver. The water tastes like tears and this leads to the discovery of Sugrīva. After this comes the scenes of the interview with Sugrīva, Rāma shooting his arrow through seven trees to prove his prowess to Sugrīva, the first fight between Vālin and Sugrīva, with Rāma standing in a hesitating attitude (and behind him there is a cockatoo on a tree in the background), the second fight and death of Vālin, Sugrīva with a wreath of leaves round his waist, the wedding of Tārā and Sugrīva, the scene of Rāma, Sugrīva, and others holding a consultation, the chief monkey warriors being presented to Rāma, Hanūmat jumping over to Laṅkā, and his discovering Sītā (a servant is seen with woolly hair in the background). It should be noted that the servants in all the scenes in which they appear have woolly hair. Negro slaves must already have been familiar figures in the Javanese courts. The concluding scenes are: the burning of Laṅkā by Hanūmat with his flaming tail (here the artist has with a fine sense of humour introduced into this scene of confusion, the figure of an ascetic taking away treasures from a burning house), Hanūmat reporting his exploits to Rāma, Rāma on the sea-shore, bow in hand, and the sea god rising from the waters, the building of the bridge and fishes swallowing up the stones. This episode of the fish swallowing the stones is in the Malay *Hikāyat Seri Rāma*.

There are minor details where the Prambanan bas-reliefs differ from

the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, for example: the introduction of a second *rākṣasī* in the Tāṭakā episode of a second *rākṣasa* in the combat with Virādha, the punishment of the crow, Sītā's giving a ring to Jaṭāyu and Jaṭāyu's handing it over to Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa being carried by a flying demon, the two heads of Kabandha, the divergent version of the first meeting with Sugrīva, Rāma desisting from shooting his arrow into the sea, the fishes swallowing up the stones used for making the bridge, etc. It is curious, as Dr. Stutterheim points out, that regarding these variations, the reliefs, instead of following the contemporary old Javanese *Kākāwin*, seem to approach more closely the second (later) group of Javanese Rāma stories and the Malay version. We may now leave Prambanan with the remark that nowhere else, whether in India, Cambodia, or Siam, are the exploits of Rāma carved in stone in such a detailed and, at the same time, so truly artistic a way.

PANATARAN BAS-RELIEFS

Four hundred years after the construction of Prambanan there rose in East Java the temple of Panataran known for its Rāma reliefs made in an Indonesian style, far removed from the orthodox Indian style of Prambanan. Among the points of difference, it may be noted that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa reliefs are both found in Panataran in the same temple, the only one shrine existing there. Several dated inscriptions have been discovered in Panataran. The last date, corresponding to A.D. 1347, would bring us to the reign of the great queen of Majapahit, Jaya-viṣṇu-vardhanī, the mother of Hyam Vuruk. Probably the temple, which had been begun by her predecessors, was finished during her reign. Panataran was also known as Pāla in the Majapahit period. In the Nagarkrtagama, Hyam Vuruk, the most famous of the Javanese monarchs, is mentioned as visiting Pāla several times to worship Śiva. So it is a Śaiva temple, and it is also the largest ancient building of East Java.

Hanūmat's exploits in the *Laṅkākāṇḍa* are represented in the Panataran reliefs. We may note among them, Hanūmat reaching Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa and two of his queens seated in his treasury (which looks like a three-storeyed pagoda), Rāvaṇa in the Aśoka grove, Sītā with Tṛjaṭā, and Hanūmat coming down from a tree to meet Sītā. Then we have spirited battle scenes between Hanūmat and *rākṣasas*, trees uprooted, detachments of *bhūtas* marching in martial array to meet Hanūmat, heaps of dead and dying *rākṣasas*, and so forth. We are then introduced to Rāvaṇa's court: we see messengers kneeling before the king, a *rākṣasa* plucking out the hairs from his beard with pincers. In the following scenes, we find Hanūmat breaking the arm of Rāvaṇa's son Akṣa, his taking a sea-bath

after all the toil and trouble, and his hurrying back to the fight in the garden of celestial trees. Indrajit then appears mounted on a horse (with *nāga* heads) with a snake arrow in his bow, Hanūmat is bound in the coils of the *nāga-pāśa* and is led captive to Rāvaṇa's presence. After that Hanūmat bursts the bonds and with his flaming tail sets the palace on fire. We next see women fleeing, and Rāvaṇa with his queen seeking refuge in his water palace. Hanūmat then leaves Laṅkā after visiting Sītā once again. In the final scenes, are represented the construction of the bridge, monkeys bearing elaborate standards and reconnoitring the battle-field, the beginning of the great fight, Hanūmat killing a *rākṣasa* with a *vajra,* and the death of Kumbhakarṇa. The human faces are done badly in the series, but the monkeys and demons are quite artistic.

The story as depicted in the Panataran bas-reliefs, follows very closely the old Javanese version of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Kākāwin*. It is very strange, as Dr. Stutterheim points out, that the ninth century Prambanan bas-reliefs should be best explained by the much later Javanese *Rāmāyaṇas* of the second group and the Malay version based on them, while the fourteenth century Panataran scenes should agree closely with the earlier *Kākāwin* (of the first group) which follows Vālmīki pretty accurately. Is it because in the later Javanese versions some of the older (and cruder) Indian traditions have been preserved, which do not find a place in the *Kākāwin* following the literary and polished text of Vālmīki? Some of these unorthodox traditions belong to the pre-Vālmīki period, which the great sage rejected as too crude for his own immortal version of the story.[12]

Finally, the technique of the Panataran bas-reliefs is pure Javanese, or Indonesian, as distinguished from the purely Indian style of Prambanan. Here, too, there is a revival of older indigenous traditions. The background in the Panataran pictures is full of magical symbols, which must be survivals of very old Malay-Polynesian superstitions. It is the art of Panataran which leads to the Wayang, the popular puppet shows of modern Java, which still survives in the style of art found in the island of Bali.

THE MAHABHARATA

When the Hindus came to Java they brought their sacred texts along with them. Of these, the *Mahābhārata* soon became the most popular among the Javanese. Its eighteen Books were rapidly dramatized. Some of these renderings which were composed in prose during the reign of the great Erlangga in the eleventh century A.D. have been recently re-discovered and published by Dutch scholars. In the Malay literature, these adapta-

[12] Cf. D. C. Sen, *op. cit.*

tions from the great epic are known as the *Hikāyat Pāṇḍava lima*. Portions of the *Mahābhārata* were also rendered into old Javanese, or Kavi poetry, during the reign of Jayabaya of Kediri by his court poet Penoolooh. This work is known as the *Bhārata Yuddha, Brata Yuda* in modern Javanese. Persons and places referred to in the epic became so familiar to the Javanese people that in due course the episodes of the *Mahābhārata* were supposed to have been taken place in Java itself, and Javanese princes claimed lineal descent from the Pāṇḍava and Yādava heroes.

From the beginning, however, old Malay-Polynesian myths mingled with the Indian traditions. And from A.D. 1500 to 1758, the period of Mohammedan conquest and devastating wars that followed, the old Hindu associations receded into the background. About the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a Javanese renaissance, and during this time interest in the old times was revived and energetic attempts were made to recover the Hindu literature. But the Kavi could be read but imperfectly at the time: consequently strange mistakes crept into the texts which were written then, though they were based on the old Javanese texts which were still available in the eighteenth century. On these texts were based the Javanese puppet shows (Wayang) which have preserved the old Hindu traditions up to the present time. Lastly, the *dalang* (the performer of the shadow-plays) himself introduced changes as he was continuously adapting the old stories to contemporary environments in order to make his representations more popular.

The *dalang,* while performing the show, generally looks to *lakons,* or short dramatic sketches, to refresh his memory. He also improvises on the spur of the moment to suit the show to the taste of the audience. There are also some larger texts to help the *dalang,* besides these *lakons.* The *lakons,* or short dramas, are divided by M. Kats into four groups: (1) Stories of gods and giants, as well as the origin of heroes, generally taken from the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata.* These stories are mingled with a considerable element of Malay-Polynesian legends. (2) The Arjuna Sahana Bahu group. (3) The *lakons* based on the *Rāmāyaṇa.* (4) The last and the most important group dealing with adventures of the Pāṇḍavas and the Yādavas. About 150 *lakons* are based on the *Mahābhārata.* Eight of them, the Viṣṇu Krama, Bambang Kalinga, Palasara Rabi, and the rest, describe the story of the ancestors of the Pāṇḍavas.

In the *Mahābhārata,* the wanderings of the Pāṇḍavas begin after the *jatugṛha* (lac house) adventure ; next Yudhiṣṭhira is crowned king at Indraprastha ; after that comes the game of dice which is followed by further wanderings, and then the Pāṇḍavas live in disguise at the court of King

Virāta. Hostilities commence at Kurukṣetra with the reappearance of the Pāṇḍavas in public.

The Javanese *lakons* do not always follow the original. According to their version, a game of chess is played in the *jatugṛha* itself, and during the game the Pāṇḍava brothers are given poisoned drinks. Bhīma, Brata Sena in Javanese, alone retains his senses and removes his brothers from the burning house. Then after long wanderings, the brothers reach the country called Wirata. When they make themselves known at last to King Matsapati of Wirata, they receive as a present from their host the realm of Nagamarta (Indraprastha). Draupadī's *svayaṁvara* takes place at this period.

Meanwhile, Sujudana (Duryodhana) becomes very powerful at Nagastina (Hastinā). The Pāṇḍavas are driven out of their capital by him. They seek refuge at the court of King Matsapati of Wirata. Even Kṛṣṇa has to abandon his capital Dvāravatī. Then follows the Brata Yuda or Bhārata Yuddha.

Arjuna is the greatest favourite of the Javanese audience. He plays the leading rôle in at least fifty *lakons*. At the outset of his career, however, by a disreputable trick, he gets rid of his rival Palgu Nadi who was also a brilliant pupil of Droṇa. His wooing of Subhadrā and his combats with other aspirants to her hand are narrated in several *lakons*. Numerous are his other adventures and love affairs. His Javanese names are also numerous: Permade, Endralaya, Parta Kusuma, Chakra Nagara, and so forth. In some *lakons* Śikhaṇḍin is represented as one of the wives of Arjuna. Two of his sons are married to two of the daughters of Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, Arjuna's daughter Sugatavatī is given in marriage to Kṛṣṇa's son Sāmba. These and other descendants of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are supposed to have founded some of the princely houses of Java. Punta-deva Yudhiṣṭhira, Wrekodara, or Brata Sena, Dewi Arimbi and her son Gatotakacha, Sujudana (Duryodhana—an incarnation of Daśamukha), are all familiar names in Muslim Java. Indeed, custom prescribes that such and such a *lakon* of the *Mahābhārata* should be played on such and such an occasion in the family.

PART II

THE GĪTĀ LITERATURE

9

THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ: A GENERAL REVIEW OF ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTER

CHRONOLOGICAL STRATIFICATION OF THE MAHABHARATA

IT is admitted now on all hands that our present *Mahābhārata* of over 80,000 stanzas (excluding the supplementary *Harivaṁśa*) has grown from an original 'Jaya' of Vyāsa, through the 'Bhārata' of Vaiśampāyana, into Sauti's 'Mahā-Bhārata' with its illustrative old-world stories great and small (the *ākhyānas* and *upākhyānas*) and its ethico-philosophical disquisitions. The two additions last mentioned, extending as they do to more than twice the length of Vaiśampāyana's 'Bhārata', have naturally obscured the legitimate character of the *Mahābhārata* as chronicled history (*itihāsa*), and have rather brought to the fore its character as India's all-embracing Dharma-śāstra: her 'Bible and Law-book' welded into one, so much so that some scholars have gone to the length of denying any real historical background to the poem, and have even essayed to interpret it as some sort of a 'seasonal myth' (A. Ludwig), or a moral allegory couched in a literary form. This seems to be going too far. Be that as it may, the epic, in any case, makes no secret of its own gradationed growth,[1] although, in a sort of a pietistic mood, it seeks to attribute all these three forms or stages to the same eponymous author—Vyāsa—whose inspiration was believed to animate, as an undercurrent, even those portions that could not make room for Vyāsa's *ipsissima verba*. Contrary, however, to one's expectations in the matter, there do not exist—at any rate, there have not been so far adduced—any acceptable *objective* criteria, nor even any cogent, consistent, and critical arguments of a more or less subjective nature, that would enable us to separate and clearly demarcate the three hypothesized strata from beginning to end, seeing that the handicrafts of the three putative authors of the epic repeatedly run into each other and are now well-nigh inextricably intermixed. It is easy enough to say that a particular passage or a particular incident is a late addition, but it is next to impossible to exactly delimit its extent and amputate it so as to leave no seams or vestiges of the operation behind—except in the case of those passages which the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*, sponsored by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona, has succeeded, on actual manuscript evidence, in ejecting as provincial interpolations of some latter-day Vyāsaids. The

[1] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), *Ādiparvan*, I. 19 ff, 56-61.

total extent of these proved interpolations in the published *parvans* of the epic already runs into a few thousand stanzas; but it is not time yet to make any formal pronouncement in the matter.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

The problems of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, like that of the *Mahābhārata*, are equally complex. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is universally acclaimed as comprehending the quintessence of the *Mahābhārata* philosophy. This is evident even from a *prima facie* consideration of the outstanding climactic position —the very hour of the commencement of the fatal fratricidal war—that has been assigned for its promulgation. But in view of the declared three-stage evolution of the *Mahābhārata*, the question naturally arises: to which of these three forms of the parent epic does the *Bhagavad-Gītā* belong? Or are we, in the alternative, to assume that there existed an 'original' form of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* belonging to the 'Jaya', another slightly elaborated form of it belonging to the 'Bhārata', and that there is the current existing form for the present *Mahābhārata*? Now it seems fairly certain that there are parts of our present *Mahābhārata* that presuppose, and are hence later than, the current *Bhagavad-Gītā*, seeing that there are stanzas, half stanzas, and quarter stanzas, from all parts of the poem, found quoted almost verbatim everywhere in the epic.[2] There are likewise a few adaptations and abridgements of the 'Holy Song' found in various parts of the epic which, in the present sequence of the *parvans*, come both before and after the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.[3] It seems to be also the case, on the other hand, that there are a few passages in the *Mahābhārata* which would seem to fit in better in a form of the epic wherein the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had not assumed its present dominating position. To give just one instance, the *Kṛṣṇa-pratijñā-bhaṅga* episode occurs twice in the *Bhīṣmaparvan*: once on the third day of the battle[4] and once again on the ninth day.[5] The two accounts are more or less similar. Now, on a detailed comparison of the two passages, from the point of view of vocabulary, grammar, metre, and contents,[6] it has been found that the *earlier* portion of the third day's account is more primitive and original than the corresponding portion of the ninth day's account, while the *later* portion of the third day's account is exaggerated and secondary when compared with the corresponding portion of the ninth day's account. This naturally

[2] Most of these are indicated in the Notes given below the *Bhagavad-Gītā* text of the *Mbh*. (Cr. Ed.).

[3] See *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, xii, pp. 86-112. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* occurs in *Bhīṣmaparvan*, the sixth Book, chapters 25-42 of the Bombay Ed. of the epic (=chapters 23-40 of the Critical Edition).

[4] *Mbh*. (Cr. Ed.), VI. 55. 34ᵃ-66ᵇ.

[5] *Ibid*., VI. 102. 24ᵃ-52ᵈ.

[6] I have discussed the problem in the ABORI, xxvi, pp. 106-119.

suggests the possibility of the earlier portion of the third day's account having been once followed by the concluding portion of the ninth day's account. What concerns us to note here is that the secondary (i.e. initial) portion of the ninth day's account[7] contains an unmistakable reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* teaching, which is absent in the corresponding earlier and 'original' version of the third day[8]—a circumstance which supports the inference that there was a stage in the development of the epic story in which Bhīṣma fell at the end of the third day's fight, and in which there was no *Gītā* taught on the opening day; or if there was some *Gītā* taught, it must, at any rate, not have been our present poem of seven hundred stanzas.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF PROGRESSIVE ELABORATION

The question then is—since, unlike the parent epic, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* nowhere refers to its own gradationed growth—are there adequate indications in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* itself pointing to its composite nature? In this connection, there are, to begin with, certain alleged inconsistencies and contradictory statements in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* assembled by K. T. Telang,[9] R. Garbe,[10] R. Otto,[11] and others, which are believed to point to a progressive elaboration of the 'original' form of the poem, of (700 – 172 =) 528 stanzas according to Garbe, of 133 stanzas according to Otto, and of a still smaller but unspecified number of stanzas according to Jacobi, Hopkins, and others, into an intermediate form (Otto believed that no less than twelve such intermediate forms can be detected!), before the work assumed its present, more or less, stabilized form,[12] to which practically no additions have been since made.[13] The very multiplicity and mutual

[7] *Mbh.* (Cr. Ed.), VI. 102. 34-37.

[8] *Ibid.*, VI. 55. 44-46.

[9] Introduction to S.B.E. VIII. pp. 11-13.

[10] *Die Bhagavad-Gītā*; second Ed., 1921. For my criticism, cf. *Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Fellowship Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy* (delivered in December 1925 under the auspices of the Calcutta University; Part I. Poona, 1929), pp. 94-101.

[11] See J. E. Turner's English Translation of Otto's German books (1934-35) on the subject. I have discussed Otto's original arguments in detail in the JUB, V, No. 6, pp. 63-133.

[12] R. R. Bhagawat Shastri of Bombay pleaded for the recognition of six stages between the original form of 60 stanzas and the present form (see *Vividhajñānavistār* for 1906, No. 7, pp. 273-283); but the argument is mainly subjective and cannot stand detailed scrutiny. Professor Charpentier's views are best summarized in his own words. He thinks that the present text of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* mainly consists of three different parts: (I) Canto I and Canto II. 1-11 and 31-38, belonging to the original text of the *Mahābhārata*. (ii) Canto II. 12-30 and 39-72; Canto III. 1 to Canto XI. 50; and Canto XVIII. 74-78, constituting the 'earlier' *Gītā*. Of this part, the *Triṣṭubh* verses in XI. 15-50 may probably be the remnants of an old *Bhāgavata* hymn. (iii) Canto XI. 51-55 and Canto XII. 1 to Canto XVIII. 73 constitute the 'later' *Gītā*. (See IA for 1930, LIX, pp. 46-50, 77-80, 101-105, and 121-126.)

[13] The problem of the so-called *Kashmir Version of the Bhagavad-Gītā* with its '14 additional stanzas and four half-stanzas' I have discussed in the NIA II, No. 4, pp. 211-251; and that of the 'Fake' Gondal *Gītā* of 745 stanzas, in the *Ganganath Jha Research Institute Journal* (Nov. 1943) pp. 21-31. Compare also the Introduction to the Critical Edition of the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, pp. LXXXV-CII, regarding the Old-Javanese version of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

incompatibility of these searches, or 'divings', for the 'original' *Bhagavad-Gītā* should teach us caution. The theories, of course, carry with them the questionable advantage of saving us from all bother of interpreting a given puzzling passage from the poem, consistently with the context, once we manage to label it as a later interpolation. Moreover, this game of discovering older strata in the poem was found particularly welcome by those who, balked in their original intention of proving that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had borrowed its theistic philosophy from the New Testament,[14] endeavoured to find a sort of a secondary solace in the argument that the influence of the Bible must have made itself felt in the formulation of at least the second stage in the evolution of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. And the fact that the various orthodox Vedānta commentators are able to make the self-same text of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* mean different and mutually inconsistent things was adduced to support the thesis that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in its present form can yield no self-consistent philosophical teaching at all, if we insist upon interpreting it as a unitary whole. Hopkins's oft-quoted classical description of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as 'at present a Kṛṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuite poem, and this in turn at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upaniṣad'[15] simply means that the different parts of the poem have different teachings to inculcate corresponding to the time of their genesis, but that the poem as a whole has no one definite teaching to give. If so, one has to ask, in all soberness, whether such an aimless hotchpotch of a poem could ever come to occupy in the epic itself, and in the society which accepted the epic as its guide to conduct, the dominant position that it is admitted on all hands to have occupied for, at any rate, the last twelve hundred years.

DOES THE BHAGAVAD-GITA PRESENT A UNITARY TEACHING?

But how possibly, our critic would urge, can the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, such as it actually is, be made to yield any unitary and self-consistent teaching when we consider its manifold internal contradictions and inconsistencies? Let us, therefore, examine some of the outstanding illustrations and arguments that have been adduced in this connection:

(i) The impossibility of such a long poem being taught on the battlefield just at the time when the two armies were about to commence fight (*pravṛtte śastrasampāte*) has been urged by most critics from Humboldt onwards. The more important point, however, is to determine whether all the diverse arguments and elucidations introduced in the present poem

[14] The theory was started by Lorinzer (1869), supported by Weber and Garbe, and refuted by Telang (1875) and R. G. Bhandarkar (*IA*, III. 1874, pp. 14 ff.)
[15] *Religions of India*, p. 389.

were absolutely necessary to convert Arjuna's *na yotsye*—I will not fight—into *kariṣye vacanaṁ tava*—I will do thy bidding. Scholars who have not cared to investigate the bearing of the various parts of the poem in its chain of concatenated arguments feel that the poem is far too much padded by extrinsic and scholastic matters. One of the most discerning of such scholars, H. Jacobi, held the view that the question raised by Arjuna in the first chapter was fully and adequately answered by the stanzas up to II. 38; and that the arguments following, which introduce *sāṁkhya, yoga, vyavasāya, samādhi*, and other technical terms, and at which point every fresh and enthusiastic reader of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* encounters his first set-back, definitely herald an interpolation.[16] What now is the argument urged from stanzas II. 11 to II. 38? (a) The Ātman cannot be injured and does not die; the body perishes and can be renovated. (b) Assuming that the Ātman really dies (which, however, is not true[17]), that is an unavoidable circumstance. (c) The only *svadharma* of the Kṣatriya is to fight and conquer, or himself perish on the battle field. (d) 'Consider pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, all alike, and get thee ready to fight: thereby wilt thou incur no sin.' That is all that Kṛṣṇa has to say. The argument could not have convinced one less endowed in intellect than Arjuna: 'Bhīṣma cannot be killed; therefore (reversing Kant's '*Du kanst: so wille*') kill him! Should not the duty of man as man, of the pupil and the grandson, be more binding on the individual than the warrior's abstract code? Death, howsoever understood, might be inevitable; but why should Arjuna's arrows accomplish it rather than old age, disease, or some other cause? Some of these issues were actually raised by Arjuna, and it is difficult to imagine that the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, leaving aside the historicity of its teaching, can be complete without a convincing reply to them.

(ii) Garbe regards stanzas III. 9-18 as an interpolation from the Mīmāṁsā point of view made with the object of recommending ritualism; and he adduces as one of the telling proofs of its lateness the evident contradiction between 'He has no duty'—*tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate*[18] and 'Do your duty'—*kāryaṁ karma samācara*.[19] 'If *kārya* (duty) forsooth does not exist, how is it to be accomplished?' Oldenberg seems to have agreed with Garbe in this view. But it is forgotten that the injunction *kāryaṁ karma samācara* is preceded by three very important words: *tasmāt* (therefore), *asaktaḥ* (without attachment), and *satatam* (always), which would be meaningless without the intervening discussion which Garbe wants us to reject as an interpolation. *Satatam*, because rolling the wheel of sacrifice (*yajña-*

[16] See *ZDMG*, LXXII (1918), p. 323 f.
[17] *B.G.* II. 30.
[18] *Ibid.*, III. 17d.
[19] *Ibid.*, III. 19b.

cakra-pravartana) is a constant, continuous, and inalienable duty; *asaktaḥ*, for the reason given in III. 19[a20]; and *tasmāt*, because *kārya* performed as recommended in III. 17[abc] has no binding force as *kārya*; one does it, of course, but not as an obligation or imposition from without (*sa karotyeva—atha vā, karotu nāma—kiṁ tu tatra svakṛtatva-buddhir nāsti*). The *yajña-cakra-pravartana* passage far from being an interpolation is in fact one of the most important passages in the poem; but few take the trouble to understand it properly. In the familiar *cakra* (cyclic series) of ocean-cloud-rain-rivers, what the first member loses (as vapour), the last member has to restitute it (as water), and then only can the wheel remain in motion. So too in the series *akṣara*(=*sarvagataṁ* Brahma)-Veda.[21] *Yajñakarma-parjanya-anna-bhūta*, the last member (=human beings) shall have to restore what the first member has lost in the act of creation:[22] then only can the wheel remain in motion. Nobody can hence be allowed to plead that he is an insignificant atom in the creation and that his help in continuing the wheel in motion can be dispensed with. The leaky and broken jar, or bucket, in the water-wheel must move with the wheel irrespective of the quantity of water it lifts up. It is an organic part of the wheel and if it refuses co-operation, the wheel will simply stop. The work is not of any one of the jars or buckets individually, but of the whole process, and what is essential is not the quantity of the water lifted, but the going through the process, taking along all the other jars (*loka-saṁgraha*) in a spirit of duty, faith, and selfless service. And *yajña* does not here stand merely for the ritual act: *puruṣo vā yajñaḥ*. It is the failure to understand the real significance of the Yajña-cakra-pravartana doctrine that is responsible for this unfortunate attempt to drop the passage.

(iii) We next pass on to consider some of the contradictions in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* assembled by K. T. Telang and others, particularly on the question of Freewill and Determinism. Now it is evident that the main purpose of Kṛṣṇa's teaching to Arjuna is to advise him not to renounce activity, but to fight as befits a Kṣatriya. *Tasmād yudhyasva Bhārata*—Therefore, O descendant of Bharata, fight—is a constantly recurring adjuration in the poem. Arjuna, for his own part, does not doubt for a moment that he is a free agent, free to fight or not to fight; and quite in conformity with this belief are the concluding words of Kṛṣṇa, *yathecchasi tathā kuru*,[23]

[20] Cf. *B. G.*, III. 7, 18.

[21] The word used is 'Brahma', which means not only Veda but also the Prakṛti, both being creations of the *Akṣara* (cf. *Muṇḍaka Up.*, I. 7-9). As the Veda is responsible for ritual acts, so is the Prakṛti responsible for *all* human acts whatsoever; and like the *yajña*, every act of the individual has to be dedicated to the ultimate source of all *pravṛttis* (actions) in the universe (XVIII. 46).

[22] Cf *B. G.*, V. 29, IX. 27, XVIII. 46, 56.

[23] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 63.

conceding him freedom of choice. But side by side with these, we have statements like: 'Man, even though possessed of knowledge, ever acts conformably to his inner nature. Creatures follow out their inborn nature: what can coercion avail there?'[24] Or again: 'That false notion of self resting upon which thou art thinking, "I will not fight", futile is that resolve of thine. Thy inborn nature will perforce compel thee. Constrained, O Son of Kuntī, by thy own inborn urge to act, what thou, through self-delusion, dost not wish to do, even that thou wilt do in sheer helplessness.'[25] Man, it would thus appear, is a helpless tool in the hands of his *triguṇātmaka-prakṛti* (Nature composed of three *guṇa* constituents). Parallel to the above is Kṛṣṇa's statement[26] that it is God that abides within the hearts of all and causes and controls their activity; while in the course of that Omniform Vision (*viśvarūpa-darśana*) vouchsafed to Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa calls upon him to do what the Deity has already settled that he is to do.[27] In the face of these and other similar declarations, one feels inclined to ask: Is man's vaunted freedom of choice then a mere mockery? If everything is predetermined by Prakṛti and willed by God, what justification remains for even God's declaring that a particular kind of person is dearest[28] to Him, and that another sort of person is the basest of all, whom He hurls down into deepest degradation?[29] And on the top of all this, Kṛṣṇa is ready to declare that even His own actions, upon which the salvation of the entire universe depends, He carries out not because He is aware of any inner compulsion, but merely with a view to setting an example to others: 'There exists not for me to do, O Pṛthā's Son, anything at all in the three worlds that has to be done, nor anything to be obtained that has not been obtained; yet I continue to be in action. For, were I—if ever—not to be sleeplessly at work, O Pṛthā's Son, men, in every wise, would follow in my track. These worlds would (then) sink into ruin if I were not to be at work.'[30] Elsewhere[31] we are told that man's present conduct is the resultant of all the latent and inherent tendencies acquired by him through earlier existences, so that in a newer existence he is furnished with a strong impetus to begin the game of life just where he had left it before, with the result that all his actions are practically predetermined for him by the way he had travelled his earlier courses; and as the world is conceived as a beginningless series of existences,[32] there is not left to man even the paltry consolation of his having made once at least, at the very beginning of the aeons, an absolutely free choice which has inevitably determined the endless chain of his subsequent 'choices', if they be so designated. Perhaps, the quintessence

[24] *Ibid.*, III. 33. [25] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 59-63. [26] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 61.
[27] *Ibid.*, XI. 33. [28] *Ibid.*, XII. 20. [29] *Ibid.*, XVI. 19.
[30] *Ibid.*, III. 22-24ab [31] *Ibid.*, VI. 43. [32] *Ibid.*, IV. 5, XV. 3.

of all contradictions on the topic is the following enigmatic declaration: 'He who sees in (apparent) action (real) no-action, and who in (apparent) no-action, (real) action: he amongst men is the man of discernment; he, the man set in *yoga*; he, the doer of the entire action (as such).'[33] How are all these contradictory statements to be unified and set forth as a consistent doctrine of human conduct? Let us try and find out.

FREEWILL VERSUS DETERMINISM

To begin with, it has to be remembered that the Sāṁkhya metaphysics as endorsed by the *Bhagavad-Gītā* holds by the view that all activity as such is due to the Prakṛti and its *guṇa* triad. The Puruṣa, who by his very nature is incapable of action, becomes tainted with activism of a sort in regard to certain acts, *only if he views* those particular acts of the Prakṛti *with interest and yearning*. Compare: 'That the (various) acts which are being accomplished, are in every wise accomplished by the Prakṛti: who so perceives this, and also perceives the self as non-active: he truly perceives.'[34] Were the Puruṣa, on the contrary, *to view* any of the activities of the Prakṛti *with apathy and yearning*, the Prakṛti would cease to function as far as this particular Puruṣa and those particular actions were concerned. In fact, evincing interest or apathy for the otherwise inevitably predetermined chain of the Prakṛti's activities is the only so-called freedom of the will that is left to the Puruṣa. We can avail ourselves in this connection of the familiar illustration of the drink-addict who, day in and day out, makes and breaks solemn resolutions to give up the drink-habit altogether. These pious resolutions of his do not normally materialize; because, as a result of his excessive and uncontrolled indulgence in the vice of drinking, he is no longer able to hold before his mind's eye, steadily and unswervingly, the noble picture of himself as cured of that debasing habit and to resist sternly the inroads upon his attention of that other picture of the rapturous and self-forgetting ecstasy into which he can pass by the simple act of lifting the glass to his lips. It becomes eventually then a question of attention—steady, one-pointed, and unswerving—which is helped on by the associates a man keeps, the literature that he imbibes, the habits and ideals that he has formed for himself: in fact his entire social, intellectual, and moral *entourage*. The *cetana* or sentient soul, according to the theory, is powerless to act; but it is his to bestow and to concentrate attention; and to the extent that he exercises his choice in the matter, he acquires the status of a morally responsible agent.

[33] *Ibid.*, IV. 18.
[34] *Ibid.*, XIII. 29; compare also III. 27-28

Now the Jīva or the individual soul—*kṣetrajña* as he is designated[35]—is declared to be only a tiny part (*aṁśa*) of the supreme Self (Paramātman = Brahman = Kṛṣṇa). The Prakṛti that determines and conditions the activities of the Jīva is in the same context called the *kṣetra*;[36] elsewhere it is called the *aparā*, or the lower, Prakṛti, in contrast with the Jīva, who is said to be the *parā* Prakṛti, and it is also named the Divine *māyā*.[37] The relation of the Jīvātman to the lower Prakṛti and its *guṇa* triad, as explained in the previous paragraph, is exactly the relation between the Paramātman and His *māyā*. He is only the *adhyakṣa* (overseer) watching the cosmic Prakṛti as it displays the wonderful phantasmagoria of creation,[38] and normally not caring to interfere in the process. But when, on specific occasions, He does find interference necessary,[39] He carries out the mission of the *avatāra*, averring all the time: 'These acts, however, do not, O Dhanañjaya, occasion any bondage for Me; for I remain like one unconcerned, and not attached to those acts'.[40] The Paramātman has also, in the second place, an analogous relationship with the Jīvātman so that just as God does not, as a rule, think it necessary to interfere with the normal course of the Prakṛti and its cosmic activities, He does not likewise find it necessary to interfere with the normal 'acts' of the individual souls, which it is easily possible to do for Him who is functioning as the Divine presence dwelling within the hearts of them all.[41] For, it is said: 'As having no beginning and no *guṇas*, the highest Self is not liable to mutation; (and so,) although situate within the body, O Son of Kuntī, He does nothing and is affected by nothing'.[42] Also compare: 'Neither the doer's status, nor the acts (to be done), does the Lord create for the people; nor also the joining of the fruit to the action; it is Nature (*svabhāva*), however, that operates (in the matter)'.[43] God's is the inner voice which, moreover, the individual soul *may* choose to disregard. It is also to be noted that this inner voice often expresses itself through the great Presences and Personalities of the day (the *vibhūtis*); and, at rare intervals, He might also descend as an *avatāra* for the salvation of mankind, could we but have the trained eye and ear and intellect to see, to hear, and to understand Him aright. The Lord is, however, considerate and practical; and so He leaves behind precepts in the form of the Śāstras, which are quite capable of serving as an adequate guide to conduct-man during the periods constituting the intervals between one *avatāra* (or one great *vibhūti*) and another,[44] and which are normally

[35] *Ibid.*, XIII. 1-2. [36] *Ibid.*, XIII. 5-6. [37] *Ibid.*, VII. 4-5, 14.
[38] *Ibid.*, IX. 10. [39] *Ibid.*, IV. 7-8. [40] *Ibid.*, IX. 9.
[41] Cf. *B. G.*, XIII. 22, XV. 14-15. [42] *B. G.*, XIII. 31.
[43] *Ibid.*, V. 14. [44] Cf. *B. G.*, XVI. 24.

designed to give effect to God's own ultimate purpose in this universe.[43] If then a person were to follow the Śāstras, listen to the teachings and life-lessons of the great *vibhūtis*, and, above all, reverentially recite, ponder over, and understand the doings of the *avatāra* in a mood of faith and devotion, to that extent he is enabled—by the method of merging his own separate interest and existence into the Divine—to be of one essence with Him, to see things from God's own point of view, and so achieve his own salvation. For he will then have reached the conviction that the diverse happenings in this universe follow a divinely laid-down course which is designed to accomplish the greatest ultimate good of humanity, so that each has to play here below, with knowledge and understanding, his own pre-ordained part in the whole, very much like the individual jar or bucket of the water-wheel. There is of course a world of difference between a knowing and willing discharge of one's own function in a system of ends, wherein the parts are realized as being in an organic and disinterested relationship with the whole, and the disgruntled, mechanical going through the process because you cannot well have it otherwise.

THE UNHINDERED PREROGATIVE OF THE SELF

One word of caution, it is, however, necessary to utter. What has been suggested hitherto as the probable teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* on the problem of the freedom of the will should not be understood to preach a mere blind, unquestioning conformity to the Śāstras of the day, or to the command of some Prophet: not a mere 'Get thee behind me'. With the intellect-apparatus so generously placed at your disposal by the Prakṛti, it ought clearly to be your duty to think for yourself furiously and in the 'dry light' of reason, uninfluenced by considerations of the *ahaṁ* and *mama*: of the *me* and the *mine*. It is not impossible that it might then dawn upon you, at specific periods in the history of mankind, or specific moments in the life of the nation, that time has become ripe for a change in the current Śāstras, which might have strayed woefully away from the original intentions with which the Almighty Lord had fashioned them; and, further, it might even be just possible that God might have chosen *you* as one of His instruments for the inauguration of the change therein as demanded by the altered times. It might then be your task to work as a sort of an advanced expeditionary force whose lot, not impossibly, might be to perish at the

[43] If the Śāstra, *ex hypothesi*, expresses the *avatāra's* solution of the problems for which He came down on this earth (IV. 8), we can legitimately assume that, after the passing away of the *avatāra*, conditions would not change so suddenly as to make the Śāstra introduced by the *avatāra* altogether inapplicable. This can happen only by slow degrees, and by the time the difficulties engender a crisis, there is sure to be another *avatāra* (or *vibhūti*) to modify the Śāstra where needed, or altogether alter it.

post in the interest of those who are to continue the fight. Be that as it may, to perceive, to know, to excogitate, to decide, and to devote all attention to it: this can constitute the unhindered prerogative of the self, thereby vindicating the dictum that Virtue is Knowledge ; and once these theoretical preliminaries of the act are achieved with that disinterested perfection which God declares that He maintains in all His acts,[46] the Prakṛti is bound to place unreservedly at your disposal the practical forces that are to culminate in the actual act. You have, in other words, to step out of your narrow individuality and to see things with the broad, all-embracing vision of the cosmic Self. Thereafter the stanza,[47] quoted earlier as the quintessence of all contradictions, will be—*solvitur ambulando*[48]—as clear to you as daylight. The problem of Freewill *versus* Determinism as adumbrated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* admits of a solution which gathers to a focus and completely harmonizes all the apparently conflicting statements that we meet within the poem: Freedom, in other words, is—not self-determination alone, but —S e l f - r e a l i z a t i o n.

ANOTHER VULNERABLE EVIDENCE OF THE COMPOSITE NATURE OF THE GITĀ

(iv) I next take up an alleged internal evidence brought to the fore by R. Otto to prove that certain sections of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are, on its own evidence, added to it by a later hand. In argument (I), I cited the view of Jacobi that the doctrinal part of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* really ended with stanza II. 38. Starting from that, I take up the argument of R. Otto who regards the *viśva-rūpa-darśana* in chapter eleven, particularly the *ghora-rūpa-darśana* part of it, as constituting the central and the most indispensable part of the teaching—a sort of 'Sermon on the Mount' proclaimed in tones of thunder and listened to with trepidation and conviction. Otto accordingly proposes, after stanza II. 37, to continue the 'original' poem with chapter eleven, only adding, in between, the first eight stanzas of chapter ten as they declare that Kṛṣṇa is himself the supreme Godhead ; for, without such a declaration, Arjuna's expressed desire to have the theophany or God-vision in chapter eleven would remain unmotivated. That between stanza II. 37 and stanza XI. 1 nothing else intervened in the 'original' *Gītā*, Otto tells us, is proved by the summary of the headings which Arjuna enumerates in stanzas XI. 1-2 as constituting all that Kṛṣṇa had taught him up to that point. These two stanzas would enable and justify us to declare everything not actually mentioned in them as an interpolation on the authority of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* itself.

[46] *B.G.*, III. 22. [47] *Ibid.*, IV. 18.
[48] This Latin phrase literally means, 'it is solved by walking' and implies that a problem is solved by actual performance. The classical tradition alluded to by it is that Diogenes by rising and walking confuted Zeno who argued that all things are at rest.—ed.

Now, what are the things actually mentioned in the two stanzas which Otto elevates to the position of a 'critical canon'? Only three points: (a) *Guhyam-adhyātma-saṁjñitam* (secret designated as belonging to Ātman); (b) *Bhūtānām bhavāpyayau* (the origin and dissolution of beings); (c) *Avyavām māhātmyam* (undecaying majesty), which, according to Otto, refer respectively to II. 11-13, 20, 22, 29-30; II. 20, 22, 29-30; and X. 1-8. Everything else that is found in the present *Gītā* must therefore be pronounced as an interpolation according to the *Gītā* itself. What then about the advice to follow the Kṣatriya code of conduct,[49] which Otto has accepted as part of the 'original' *Gītā*? Secondly, the teaching that is to be described as *'guhyam-adhyātma-saṁjñitam'*, if *adhyātma* is to be the *saṁjñā* (designation) of it, must contain the word *adhyātma* (or at any rate Ātman) at least once. We do not find it there at all, but we do find them in portions like VIII. 3 and IX. 1-6; stanzas IX. 1-2 even contain the word *guhyam*. The second item, *bhūtānām bhavāpyayau* (which is said to have been taught *vistaraśaḥ*—at some length) is strangely enough made up of the last four stanzas already devoted to item (a). Such a description can more probably belong to IX. 6-8, VIII. 18-19, or VII. 4-6. One is compelled therefore to conclude that the so-called 'critical canon' of Professor Otto lets him down lamentably. I am deliberately ignoring here certain unfavourable comments passed on the language and style of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as they have no bearing on the question of the composite nature of the poem.

(v) That the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is confusing and inconsistent in its use of technical philosophical terms is, however, a charge commonly made, which Deussen[50] sought to explain and account for by maintaining that the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the *Mahābhārata*, being produced during a transitional period when philosophical terminology was in a formative stage, present us an *Uebergangsphilosophie*.[51] This is not impossible. The fact, however, is that we do not possess a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the origins and the early history of the Sāṁkhya, Yoga, and the Bhakti schools of philosophy, so that the assumptions that the Sāṁkhya, for instance, must have always been the atheistic dualism of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Kārikās*, or that the Yoga is only the 'Classical' Sāṁkhya with the Īśvara (God) superadded, and that it had no independent metaphysical basis of its own, must be held to be primarily responsible for this 'inconsistent use of technical terms' that is laid at the door of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. And the confusion is perhaps worse confounded by the various *bhāṣyakāras* (commentators) bringing in the *idolas* of their own *sampradāyas* (traditional doctrines and

[49] *B.G.*, II. 31-37.
[50] *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhāratam*, Einleitung.
[51] The German word übergangs signifies what is provisional or belonging to the transitional stage —ed.

usages) to explain the ultimate teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as for instance when Śaṅkarācārya interprets the Sāṁkhya to mean *ātmānātma-viveka-jñāna* (knowledge born of discrimination between Self and not-self) culminating in the *naiṣkarmya* (exemption from acts and their consequence), from which there could not possibly result any straightway deduction in favour of even-tempered activism (*samatva-buddhi-rūpa-karma-yoga*) which the *Gītā* is particularly anxious to reach in II. 38-39. Moreover, the fact that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* should have laid deliberate emphasis on the eventual philosophical unity of the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga,[52] so that II. 38ab—which, as a legitimate deduction from the Yoga premises,[53] could be justifiably included under Sāṁkhya teaching[54]—should go to prove that what the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is anxious to establish is the ultimate *samanvaya* or harmony between not only the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga, but also between Mīmāṁsā (Ritualism) and Vedānta (Doctrine of salvation through Knowledge), as well as between Bhakti (=*vyakta-upāsanā*) and Jñāna (=*avyakta-upāsanā*). All these are merely steps or stages in the process, there being no three separate teachings (*jñāna*, *karma*, and *upāsanā*) diversely taught in the poem, but rather a judicious combination of these three methods.

THE ULTIMATE SAMANVAYA TAUGHT IN THE GITĀ

This last point as to whether, according to the qualifications of the seekers, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* lays down three parallel methods of reaching the *summum bonum*, each of the three methods, pursued by itself, being just as capable as the other two of reaching the goal, supposedly common to all alike; or whether there is a difference and a gradation between the three goals reachable by *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*, only one of them being the highest—if so, which?—to which the other two are merely propaedeutic; or whether, finally, the one and the ultimate goal taught by the poem is reachable by a judicious combination of all the three methods, deserves to be expatiated upon at fuller length. The popular view maintains that the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are divisible into three *ṣaṭkas* or hexads devoted respectively to *karma*,[55] *bhakti*,[56] and *jñāna*;[57] and the advocates of this 'trichotomy' or threefold division of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* pertinently point to three distinctive summings-up of the teaching which find a place in the concluding chapter of the poem: (a) the Karma-yoga summing up in XVIII. 46, and particularly XVIII. 56-57; (b) the Bhakti-yoga summing-up in XVIII. 54cd-55cd along with XVIII. 65;

[52] *B.G.*, V. 4-5.
[53] Cf. *B.G.*, II. 48.
[54] Cf. *B.G.*, II. 39a.
[55] *B.G.*, I-VI.
[56] *Ibid.*, VII-XII.
[57] *Ibid.*, XIII-XVIII.

and (c) the Jñāna-yoga summing-up in XVIII. 51^{ab}-54^{ab}. If three such methods of reaching the goal are actually mentioned and recognized in the concluding part of the poem, we have to carefully scrutinize the passages and ascertain if the three methods are parallel and independent alternatives, or if any one (or two) of them serve merely as stepping-stones to the remaining, which alone is capable of leading the aspirant to the highest goal obtainable by humanity.

In this connection, we have one set of interpreters who point to the wording of stanza XVIII. 54, where a *Brahma-bhūta* (a person who has realized the oneness of his essence with Brahman through Yogic practices) thereafter attains the *bhakti* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, implying thereby that *bhakti* comes after, and so is a step higher than Brahman-knowledge. And to such a deduction, stanza XVIII. 65 would lend an additional support. On the other hand, on the strength of stanza XVIII. 55, it is possible to argue that, 'after attaining the *bhakti* (*tataḥ*), the person acquires real knowledge of Myself (*Māṁ tattvato jñātvā*): and thereafter becomes of one essence with That,—i.e. Brahman, (*viśate Tad anantaram*)'.[58] This could mean that if the *Brahma-bhūta* state is anterior to *bhakti*, the ecstatic unity realized by the *bhakta* in the deepest stage of his devotion to the Lord reaches a further and higher culmination in the full-fledged realization of the *Tat-tvam-asi* (thou art that) experience.[59] And howsoever we might decide to adjudicate between the conflicting claims to superiority as between the *bhakti* or *vyakta-upāsanā* and Knowledge or *avyakta-upāsanā*, we have to face the further disconcerting fact that the votaries of the method of *jñāna* and those of *bhakti* are enjoined, finally, in the passage following, to practise Karma-yoga by dedicating all actions (*sarva-karmāṇi*: not merely acts of devotional worship) to Lord Kṛṣṇa. So far as this passage is concerned, therefore, what the *Bhagavad-Gītā* seems to be advocating is not a 'trichotomy' of *jñāna, bhakti,* and *karma,* but rather their 'triune-unity'.

Nor do the actual facts of the case warrant the view that the three hexads of the poem treat exclusively of each one of the three methods of salvation. In the first hexad, devoted to Karma-yoga, we have texts like III. 28, IV. 18-19, and IV. 37 praising *jñāna*, as well as texts like II. 61 (*Matparaḥ*), V. 29, VI. 15 (*Matsaṁsthām*), and VI. 31 favouring *bhakti.* In the second hexad, assigned to Bhakti-yoga, the *jñāna* aspect of it is emphasized in stanza VII. 18 and implied in stanza VIII. 22, while acts of worship described in IX. 34, X. 9, or XI. 54, are so generalized that a

[58] Cf. *B.G.*, XI. 54 also.

[59] I hasten to point out that some interpreters take *tad-anantaram* as one word meaning the same as *anantaram*, and understand *Māṁ* as the object of *viśate* (cf. XI. 54).

stage is bound to come when every act that one does in life can be viewed, on ultimate analysis, as a worship of the Lord: *Yad yat karma karomi tat tad akhilam Śambho tavārādhanam*—as the poet puts it. So, too, in the third hexad, concerned traditionally with *jñāna*, this *jñāna* is formally defined in stanzas XIII. 10-11 as being one with *bhakti*,[60] and one of the direct results of this *jñāna*, when fully attained, is to make us see real inaction in action[61] and so take to such actions as come to us with the current (*pravāha-patita-karma*) in the spirit of a *yajña*,[62] and as a funding back into the totality of cosmic activities our own quota of actions in the spirit of the *yajña-cakra-pravartana* motif already expatiated upon.[63] Thus the conclusion of Lokamanya Tilak in the *Gītā-rahasya* that the *Gītā* teaches *jñānāmūlaka-bhakti-pradhāna-karma-yoga*—a life of activism grounded upon knowledge and centralized around the adoration of the Lord[64] as the highest way to salvation seems to be fully vindicated. And if in advocating such a complex ideal there is in places a seeming admixture of the technical terms formulated by the various philosophical systems whose synthesis constitutes the burthen of the Lord's teaching, we ought to look upon it as unavoidable and even justifiable.

UNITY OF GODHEAD AND THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF YAJÑA

Nay, we might even go further and point out that for effecting a real and lasting *samanvaya* or 'coalescence' between these three schools possessing originally independent history of their own, a rubbing off of the angularities peculiar to each had to be a condition precedent. Thus, the objects of *saguṇa* (personal) devotion can be manifold—each divinity requiring its own implements and methodology of worship, which become pregnant with the possibility of sectarian animus and disunity. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* endeavours to counteract the evil by advocating that, under the diversity of form and apparel, the real object of devotional worship is the same Godhead, one and without a second, assuming diverse rôles and missions to please the fancy of the worshipper or meet the needs of the hour.[65] In the next place, the conception of *yajña*, or the sacrificial ritual of the Vedic texts, has been so universalized[66] by the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the greed for gains and rewards, once indissolubly linked with the old

[60] Cf. also *B.G.*, XIV. 26-27, XV. 19.
[61] *B.G.*, XIII. 29, XIV. 19.
[62] *Ibid.*, XVII. 11, XVIII. 5-6.
[63] Other texts from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that apparently seem to endorse the 'trichotomy', I have elsewhere interpreted as actually endorsing the 'triune-unity' teaching. See *Karmarkar Comm. Vol.* (Poona, 1948), pp. 1-6.
[64] As indicated in *B.G.*, IX. 27 and XVIII. 46.
[65] Cf. *B.G.*, VII. 20-22, IX. 23-25, etc.
[66] Cf. *B.G.*, IV. 25-33

Vedism, so effectively checked by the new direction to act without egoistic consciousness and without any expectation of fruit,[67] that the old doctrine of *yajña* became purged of the evils that had come in course of time to be associated with it, such as priestly avarice and monopoly, the exacting and senseless minutiae in the varied requirements of ritualistic procedure, as well as the statutory regulations about inherent and acquired qualifications demanded from those that desired to perform specific *yajñas*. It is to be noted that in order to give effect to all this, the importance of knowledge, which enables one to fathom the basic foundations of things and discover their implicit unity amidst apparent diversity, came predominantly to be emphasized,[68] and it was pointedly made clear that this knowledge was not a mere matter of intellectual assent, but one that had to penetrate much deeper and become explicit in each word that one utters, each step that one takes, each thought that one entertains.[69] For such a thoroughgoing interpenetration of knowledge, the need of purity of food and conduct acquired through continuous meticulous discipline grounded upon exercises in meditation and concentration came to be rigorously prescribed.

It was also made clear that the attainment of true knowledge need not be regarded as *ipso facto* exempting the man of knowledge from the necessity of carrying on the day-to-day disciplinary and other activities which had built up the foundations of his knowledge. For, besides the possible danger lurking in the adage: *Balavān indriyagrāmo vidvāṁsam api karṣati*—the organs of sense overpower even the learned,[70] there remains the necessity of devolving upon all leaders of thought, not by precept alone, but by unabated practice in person, to set an example to those that desire to accept their lead.[71] Hence, for the wise no less than for the unwise, the normal rule has to be to follow the established code of conduct[72] which was designed to properly regulate the affairs of society, and which can be presumed, in the absence of telling evidence to the contrary, to continue to carry on its original purpose. It has already been mentioned that necessity does arise, once in a while, to reform these Śāstras to suit altered times and circumstances. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, however, does not go out of its way to unduly emphasize this aspect of the case; but the fact that it felt the need of closing up the ranks and attempting a *samanvaya* between some of the established and allied schools of philosophy would itself go to prove that the rumblings from the distant offing of a change in the time-

[67] *B.G.*, II. 47, III. 19, IV. 19-20, V. 12, XVII. 11, XVIII. 23, etc.

[68] Cf. *B.G.*, IV. 38, XIII. 16, XVIII. 20.

[69] That, in fact, is the reason why, in XIII. 7-11, knowledge is described not from the point of view of its contents, but from the effect that it produces upon the *character* of the individual.

[70] *Manu.*, II. 215.

[71] *B.G.*, III. 26.

[72] *Ibid.*, XVI. 23-24.

honoured social fabric had already reached the ears of the discerning prophets of the day.[73]

THE ATTITUDE OF THE GITĀ TOWARDS THE FINAL ISSUE OF PHILOSOPHY

One other important problem which had evolved keen disputes in the pre-*Gītā* age, and which the *Bhagavad-Gītā* could not well have avoided, related to the most ultimate issue of philosophy that had not only agitated the minds of the thinkers of the Upaniṣadic period, but also had divided the latter-day philosophy of India into systems of thought familiarly known as Absolute Monism (Advaita), Qualified Monism (Viśiṣṭādvaita), Dualism (Dvaita), Dualism-cum-Monism (Dvaitādvaita), and Pure Monism (Śuddhādvaita). In passages like II. 72, VI. 28-31, and IX. 34, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* speaks of the unity and identity of essence (the *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā* stage)[74] to be realized and perfected through Yogic discipline culminating in *samādhi*. But is the identity absolute and without any trace of the consciousness of difference as between the *sādhaka* (soul) and the *sādhya* (Deity), between one *sādhaka* and another, as well as between the world and the world-creator? A further side-issue of the question is the definition of the exact relation between the Deity that creates and the Deity's power (*śakti* or *māyā*) which is the *modus operandi* of the creation. In other words, as Rāmānuja puts it, is this so-called *māyā* a subjective affection of the individual percipient colouring his own view of reality, or is it something objective, a something independent of the individual: a potence of the Lord Himself? Another side-issue would be the relation between Brahman, the object of what is known as *avyakta-upāsanā*, and the *avatāra* (Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva), the object of the *vyakta-upāsanā*.[75] All these are very crucial issues around which keen dispute has been raging between the several *bhāṣyakāras* (commentators) and between their latter-day followers.

To be fair, it has to be admitted that in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* there are texts like V. 19, XIV. 2, or XV. 7 that *prima facie* favour Rāmānuja's interpretation; while, at the same time, there are other texts like IV. 10, 35; V. 7; VI. 28-31; or XIV. 19 that *prima facie* go well with the Advaita interpretation. Otto holds that stanzas IX. 4-8 endorse the Dvaita interpretation. Similarly there are still other texts, like VII. 7, 12, IX. 29, XI. 54, and XVIII. 55, that have no pronounced bias either way, and have

[73] There are passages in the *Mahābhārata*, like III. 177, 15 ff., in which the basic principles of the *cāturvarṇya* foundations of society are called in question. The *Srauta* and the *Gṛhya* compendia that were being compiled contemporaneously served to meet the difficulty in their own way. Being thus assured, perhaps, that the question was already on the anvil, it may be that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* did not think it necessary to go beyond showing that it was aware of the problem involved.

[74] *B.G.*, V. 7.

[75] Characteristically enough, this question is posed by Arjuna just upon the conclusion of the *viśvarūpa-darśana*.

accordingly been mercilessly pulled this way or that by clever and unscrupulous disputants. Under the circumstances, there are three ways open to us: (1) To understand one set of texts in their obvious intention, and force the others, by the procedure too well known to the Mīmāṁsist, to support one's *parti pris*.[76] This is the procedure of the orthodox *bhāṣyakāras*. (2) To argue that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is a hasty and planless compilation of views inconsistent even in their technical terms and so constituting evidence of the composite nature of the poem. This view is dignified by the appellation 'critical or scholarly'; it would certainly have been that, if convincing objective evidence of the gradational growth of the poem could have been successfully adduced, which Garbe and Otto have failed to do. (3) To suppose that the author of the philosophical synthesis that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is intended to inculcate allowed, on certain ultimate and more or less speculative issues, an initial option of views which could be resolved only on the evidence of actual supra-sensuous experience. And as texts recording such experiences were quotable on both sides, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* may have thought it sufficient to record the divergences, especially as the practical corollaries deducible from them presented no irreconcilable opposition. For it was easy to see that the *bhakta* who gains, in the culminating stage of the *prapatti* (surrender to God) the notion and the feeling of being in absolute union with the Deity—*Vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti*—and the *Brahmabhūta sādhaka* who has realized the *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman) experience can both be correctly described as having reached a point of view from which they are enabled to see all things *sub specie aeternitatis* and so act, think, and feel in the way in which Kṛṣṇa, the *avatāra* describes himself as feeling, thinking, and acting. That is the goal that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is most anxious that we should all endeavour to attain—not all at once, of course, but by definite gradation wherein there is a steady and sustained progress onwards, and no regress backwards. Hence, from a strictly practical point of view, it should be of no moment just how, by what procedure and stages, the result is achieved. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* was accordingly very well advised indeed in leaving the niceties of the argument to be fought out amongst the learned coteries of the schoolmen, while laying its well-laid emphasis upon a life of Karma-yoga and *loka-saṁgraha—à la mode de la divinité* (after the fashion of God).

CHIEF FEATURES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GITA

At the end of this somewhat rambling discourse on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* wherein I have raised and discussed various problems and points of view

[76] A French phrase denoting 'side taken', 'mind made up', or 'set purpose'.—ed.

without perhaps being able, owing to limitations of space, to do adequate justice to all of them, it would be useful to summarize, in a couple of paragraphs, what I regard as the distinguishing feature and noteworthy achievement of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. To begin with, I must confess that, in opposition to the view which is regarded as 'scholarly and critical', I have, after years of close study, come more and more to feel and maintain that it would be doing gross injustice to the author of the poem to label it as an ill-assorted cabinet of opinions and precepts collected from the various systems of philosophy known in its day. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* certainly draws upon diverse sources, but what it accepts from them it tries to present as a co-ordinated and harmonious whole, permitting possible options even on certain ultimate and abstract issues, but firm and consistent in laying down and emphasizing certain practical deductions which alone could contribute to the welfare and stability of society. In saying this, I do not, of course, wish to contest the possibility of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* having had one or more earlier and shorter forms; but at this distance of time it is well-nigh impossible to try and reach these 'original' and 'intermediate' forms. Professor J. Charpentier, who, like Garbe and Otto, made in the *Indian Antiquary* for 1930 another noteworthy attempt in this direction, is frank enough to confess that such propositions could not be proved. 'To different minds they would possess a greater or lesser degree of verisimilitude.' In this respect, therefore, I am more disposed to agree with scholars like Dahlmann, Oltramare, Louis de la Vallée Poussin, Formichi, and others in holding that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in its present form is, not indeed a poem with a simple, unitary teaching, but a deliberate and well-formulated philosophical synthesis of views originally divergent, and propounded by more or less independent schools of thought: a synthesis undertaken by a master-thinker who felt the urge for it in order to meet certain social, philosophical, and religious situations that had threatened to become explosive. With such hypothesis at any rate we are more likely to do real justice to the poem than by a critical search after the illusory strata supposed to be imbedded therein, which has actually created more differences of views than those of the 'orthodox' interpreters, commentators, and *bhāṣyakāras*, who have come in mostly for unsympathetic criticism.

SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHIC COMPROMISE

That the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had a great anxiety to bring about and ensure a genuine and honourable compromise between parties and opinions which, in spite of their current differences, had originally in them a soul of goodness the preservation and perpetuation of which was of the utmost consequence, can be illustrated from several passages. Thus, discerning

real danger to society in the craze for renunciation of worldly interests and devotion to abstract contemplation that had come upon the people in the train of the Upaniṣadic speculation, and as a result of a reaction from the exaggerated emphasis placed upon mere forms and ceremonials in the ritual of the *yajña*, but aware at the same time of the great service rendered by the *yajña* ideology in promoting the stability and all-round progress in Aryandom, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* attempts,[77] with a good deal of special pleading, to reduce to the minimum differences between the Jñāna-yoga of the Upaniṣads and the Karma-yoga of the Mīmāṁsists, that is to say, between the 'Sāṁkhya' and the 'Yoga'. So, too, a powerful plea is put forth[78] to overcome the hatred and the jealousy between the various schools of sectarian worship, or *upāsanā*, by pointing out that the ultimate goal to be reached by them is one and the same, if one introduces an element of knowledge into their dogma. Similarly, stanzas XII. 3 ff. urge that no real difference exists in the goal reachable by the method of salvation through Knowledge (*avyakta-upāsanā*) and the one to be reached by the method of devotion (*vyakta-upāsanā*). The doctrine of the *vibhūtis* and the *avatāras* on one hand, and the extension of the conception of the *yajña* so as to include in its scope any, even the commonest, act performed in the spirit of dedication, without egoistic consciousness and hankering after fruit, on the other, came as a consequence to be particularly emphasized, and the way of salvation was naturally thrown open to all irrespective of birth, sex, or status.[79] The *Bhagavad-Gītā* goes still further. It calls upon the privileged few to be patient with the unprivileged and illiterate many, and to lead them gradually on towards the common goal.[80] It warns people that the stratification of ancient Indian society into various castes and stations was a matter of agreed convenience only, normally representing one's heredity and aptitude, which by persistent effort, it might not be altogether impossible to improve, if also, alas! to debase. Be it *daivī* (divine) or be it *āsurī* (demoniac), man is the architect of his own *sampad* (fortune), and has no right to lay the blame for it at the door of the *deva* (diety) or the *daiva* (destiny).[81]

[77] *B.G.*, III. 3-4, V. 2-6.
[78] *B.G.*, VII. 21-22, IX. 23-25.
[79] *Ibid.*, IX. 32.
[80] *Ibid.*, III. 26.
[81] *Bhagavad-Gītā* XVI. 5[cd] would seem to suggest that the *sampad* is a matter of birth, unalterable by man. But what is described there is the knowledge appertaining to Omniscient Intelligence, which is normally denied to parviscient individuals. Moreover, the mark of each *sampad* is the possession of a number of qualities (XVI. 1-4) which are always capable of a more or a less, so that the possibility of an individual, standing at the crossing of the ways, either receding from the direction taken or advancing forwards towards the same, is always a matter of choice for the individual, understanding man's freedom in this respect in the sense and with the limitations explained earlier.

The means recommended by the *Gītā* to reach this attitude of the mind is a penetrating and first-hand knowledge of things coupled with an all-round and sympathetic understanding of the individuals and the society in the midst of which it may be one's lot to live and work. A potent solvent for most of our difficulties in life is the readiness to learn to look at things from the other person's point of view so as to avoid all avoidable conflict. *Sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā*[42] is the eventual ideal to be aimed at; and this will save us from apathy and over-arrogance and enable us to fathom the foundations of society and work with all our individual light and might to achieve *loka-saṁgraha.* What is to be aimed at, of course, is not a blind and slavish conformity to the codes and the *dharmācāryas* of the day, but an understanding allegiance to them. It may be that, at times, things appear to us to be unjust and iniquitous; but in nine cases out of ten, that is due to partial and defective knowledge; although, in the remaining case, our diagnosis might be correct and we might have to cultivate knowledge 'from more to more' in order to help setting things aright once more.

True knowledge must therefore be made the basis of all that we do in society; and the mark of true knowledge, we read, is humility rather than arrogance; candour in lieu of hypocrisy, peace and purity instead of restlessness and passion, and earnest self-control taking the place of egoistic attachment to things of sense. The knowledge needed can be acquired, normally, through the gateways of sense; but another and a surer way, we learn, is that of patient inward contemplation and Yogic concentration. The proper object of such contemplation has to be, naturally, what we have been taught to learn and honour as the highest Ideal. Such Ideals can conceivably be different, and different also can be the methods of acquiring and realizing them. So long, however, as the worship (*upāsanā*) is carried on in the proper mood, we need not worry as to the actual object selected. For the *Bhagavad-Gītā* assures us that, as in the normal planning of an Aryan village, all the roads proceed from and eventually lead back to the same Temple. This spirit of tolerance, this readiness to merge all differences in the interest and pursuit of a common ideal which animates the whole poem is quite noteworthy, and it is on the strength of such a programme that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* succeeded in inducing the orthodox Mīmāṁsist with his old-world *yajña* as the be-all and end-all of existence, the post-Upaniṣadic Sāṁkhya with its dominating passion for *sannyāsa,* and the pre-Pātañjala Yoga with its mystic discipline of self-

[42] *B.G.*, V. 7.

culture, tempered by a deistic cosmology and an intellectualistic ethics, as well as the various Bhakti cults of the day with their special notions of the Deity and special modes and methods of worship: in fact, everybody who had anything at stake in the established order of society, to sink their differences and join hands in a synthetic philosophic compromise. No interpretation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* has any chance of doing real justice to the poem that misses this earnestness for honourable compromise that breathes in all its chapters.

Now the question naturally arises, what could have induced these different systems that would ordinarily exhibit a tendency to segregate and fly apart from one another, to compose their differences, close up their ranks, and agree to gather together under one banner? This is usually not expected to happen except in the face of some common and threatening danger. What could have been that danger threatening the post-Upaniṣadic society? It could not have been Buddhism, because the *Bhagavad-Gītā* nowhere makes the faintest allusion to its doctrines, as one would certainly expect in a poem of this nature.[13] It is however generally known that the couple of centuries that intervened between the end of the Upaniṣadic period and the beginning of the Buddhist period was a period of much radical free thinking, an echo of which is discernible in the *Gītā* description of the *āsurī sampad* in chapter sixteen. To these radical free-thinkers, no institution was sacred. Their 'market-place' oratory carried away the common unthinking mass who did not perceive its fatal consequences on the stability of social institutions and traditions. In the concluding chapter of the *rāja-dharma* and the early chapters of the *āpad-dharma*, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma's advice as to what the king should do when the whole kingdom has lost its moral stamina and is *dasyusād-bhūta* (made a prey to robbers), so that a time of storm and stress like the one which I envisage as the background for the *Bhagavad-Gītā* teaching need not have been an improbable contingency. Such a time produces despondent ascetics, unscrupulous sensualists, fake spiritualists, and cowardly criminals, with the bulk of the populace, tottering in their convictions neither able to give up the past nor able to live and enjoy it with untroubled conscience. We may all be said to be living in such critical times even today, trying our best to stem the tide of heretic and agnostic speculations and iconoclastic practices. It was a time then, as it is now, when all had to combine to keep the '*yajña-cakra*' on the move.

[13] The word '*nirvāṇa*' which occurs five times in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is a technical term of the pre-Buddhistic 'Kāla' philosophy. Unmistakable allusions to Buddhism in other parts of the *Mahābhārata* have no probative force even for settling the time of the present form of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, because the present *Bhagavad-Gītā* is by no means the latest part of the present form of the epic.

So the *Bhagavad-Gītā* most opportunely calls upon every earnest soul who still retains a modicum of regard for and trust in the traditions and institutions handed down to him from the past, to gauge the situation well ahead, and in complete faith that the Right must prevail in the end, fight it out without hesitation or compunction—*Yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ*.

10

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ

ESSENCE OF THE GITĀ: RENUNCIATION

SRI Ramakrishna used to say that in order to know the essence of the *Gītā* one had only to utter the word '*gītā*' ten times. If the word is repeated in quick succession, it sounds like *tāgī-tāgī-tāgī*, which has the same meaning as *tyāgī*, i.e. a renouncer. Sri Ramakrishna meant that the essential teaching of the *Gītā* was the renunciation of worldly objects and desires, and devoting oneself to meditation on God and God alone. Swami Vivekananda, speaking on the *Gītā* on a certain occasion when the writer happened to be present, said that advocacy of work without desire for its fruit and reconciliation of the different religions and philosophies of the times were its special features. Incidentally he also remarked that Sri Ramakrishna in the present age went much further as regards the harmony of religions and philosophies. Reading out some verses from the beginning of the second chapter where Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to fight, he grew eloquent in explaining the one which begins with 'Don't be a coward, O Arjuna', and so on.[1] Swamiji's emphasis was unmistakably on Karma-yoga (the philosophy of work). Both these apparently contradictory views regarding work and worklessness are true. The central teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is to attain worklessness (*naiṣkarmya*) through work.

Many commentators have tried to explain the *Bhagavad-Gītā* from different points of view, some emphasizing knowledge, some devotion, and others, work. The general impression, however, that we get from reading the whole book is that its author, tries to maintain a reconciliatory attitude towards all these different paths. Of course, by quoting isolated passages from it one can maintain the view that only one of the paths—be it knowledge, devotion, or work—is superior to the others. But whoever studies the whole text with an unbiased mind cannot but admit the harmonizing attitude of its author. Religious sects in India, for example, the followers of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, or Caitanya, advocated either knowledge or devotion as the means to liberation. The *Gītā* states different positions, but never condemns one in favour of another, though it may recommend one of the paths as easier or more suitable for a particular temperament. The teaching about *karma* (work) in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* appears to be unique. Before the days of the *Gītā*, people seem generally to have understood the

[1] *B.G.*, II. 3.

word in its Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā sense, that is, as work for some material object, or *sakāma-karma*. The author of the *Gītā* strongly condemns this type of work in many places as an impediment to higher attainments, though we cannot say that he advises everyone to discard it altogether. For instance, he says, 'The Prajāpati, having in the beginning created mankind together with the sacrifice (*yajña*), said, "By this shall ye multiply: this shall be the milch cow of your desires" '.[2]

KARMA-YOGA AND NAIṢKARMYA

Many people are so enamoured of the doctrine of selfless work (*niṣkāma-karma*) in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that they consider renunciation, or worklessness, altogether outside the teachings of the *Gītā*. They should read the relevant portions of the discussion in Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā*[3] regarding *sannyāsa* or the monastic life. They should consider the implications of such expressions as 'retiring into solitude' and 'alone',[4] as well as 'firm in the vow of a *brahmacārin*',[5] and 'renouncing every undertaking'.[6] Still it cannot be gainsaid that the emphasis is generally on *karma*; for instance, when advising Arjuna to keep his mind always fixed on the Lord, Kṛṣṇa does not forget to mention that he must also fight: 'Therefore constantly remember Me, and fight'.[7] But even here it must not be forgotten that the disciple addressed is one belonging to the warrior caste and a householder, and in directing him to fight, Kṛṣṇa has only pointed out his *svadharma*. *Svadharma* has been explained by some as the duties of one's own caste and order of life (*varṇāśrama-dharma*) and by others a little more liberally. The duties of the four castes (*varṇa-dharma*) are elaborately dealt with in verses 41-44 of the last chapter of the *Gītā*, where it is explained how one by performing the specific duties of one's caste (*varṇa*) can ultimately attain the Lord. The duties of one's order of life (*āśrama-dharma*), however, are not dealt with so explicitly; but sufficient hints are found throughout the book from which we can conclude that the householder's life (*gārhasthya-āśrama*) alone was not working in the author's mind to the exclusion of the other three *āśramas*, though these latter are not supported here exactly in the same form as we find in some other scriptures. The *Gītā* seems to be averse to extreme forms of austerity or bodily torture.[8] But that an intense sort of meditation and devotion is necessary in order to attain the Highest is amply borne out

[2] *Ibid.*, III. 10.
[3] *Ibid.*, II. 71; IV. 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 32, 33, 37, 41; V. 13; XII. 16, 19.
[4] *Ibid.*, VI. 10.
[5] *Ibid.*, VI. 14.
[6] *Ibid.*, XII. 16.
[7] *Ibid.*, VIII. 7.
[8] *Ibid.*, VI. 16; XVII. 5-6.

by the whole book, and many physical disciplines such as the control of breath (*prāṇāyāma*) as well as living in a solitary place, leading a perfectly continent life, and retiring from the hurry and worry of work, at least occasionally and under special circumstances, are also recommended.

VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE GITA

There is hardly any room for doubt that there was a great personality named Kṛṣṇa, who was a Kṣatriya king and a householder, though the details of his life remain mostly legendary. He lived in the world, but was not of the world. Having attained a great spiritual height, he attempted to preach *Brahma-jñāna* to the then existing society. He realized in his life the ancient truth of the *Ṛg-Veda*[9] that 'Existence is One, which the sages call by various names', and tried to reconcile contradictory philosophical and religious views of people.

In reading the *Gītā* one may naturally ask whether on the eve of the battle such an abstruse dialogue could take place between the two great heroes of the age, and supposing it did, what its exact form was. On this point, even the ancient commentator Śrīdharasvāmin has said in his introduction to the *Gītā* that Veda-Vyāsa, the great disciple of Kṛṣṇa, recorded the dialogue as it took place, but that he added some compositions of his own in order to make it a connected narrative. One may even think that the conversation actually took place in prose, but was recorded in verse. These doubts have weighed so much with some people that they want to deny altogether the historical event of the battle and give it an allegorical or esoteric significance. The battle, according to them, is nothing more than the eternal struggle between man's good and evil tendencies. But if we read the whole *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Gītā* is only an episode, we shall come to a very different conclusion. We may still doubt the historicity of the Kurukṣetra war ; we may consider all the *dramatis personae* as fictitious characters. Yet we cannot but think that the author of the *Gītā* wanted to solve this problem: whether action, or rather, resistance of evil, was wrong under all circumstances, and if not, how to reconcile it with the highest philosophy of life, namely, non-resistance of evil. And he has chosen this scene of battle in order to draw our attention pointedly to the evil inherent in work. There were schools of thought, such as the Sāṁkhya and the Buddhist, that believed in the giving up of all work, or worldly pursuits, as essential to perfection ; and they advocated the acceptance of this doctrine by all persons indiscriminately. The author of the *Gītā* entirely disagrees with this view. He admits with

[9] *Ṛg-Veda*, X. 1. 164, 46.

other philosophers that the highest goal of life is *mukti*, or blessedness, or absolute cessation of misery: 'Know that to be the state called *yoga*, in which there is a severance of the contact of pain.'[10] But he prescribes different methods of practice for persons differently situated.

The Pāṇḍavas have been wrongfully deprived of their rights, and in the *Udyogaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* we find the question discussed again and again from all angles—what should be the duty of a person in such circumstances—whether to fight or to flee. Finally, Kṛṣṇa is sent as a messenger of peace to the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with a proposal of very little demand on the part of the Pāṇḍavas, but he fails in his mission. The Pāṇḍavas are at last forced to a fight with their enemies, and just on the eve of the battle Arjuna says to Kṛṣṇa that he will not fight, because fighting is a sin. It is better, he says, to live peacefully by begging one's food like a *sannyāsin* than to fight one's enemies, specially when they are relatives and friends; and when Kṛṣṇa, the great Incarnation of the Lord, exhorts him to fight and condemns his attitude as unmanliness, Arjuna in a state of confusion wants to know what his exact duty at that moment is. He describes himself as bewildered. Should he fight or withdraw? And he asks repeatedly, if the highest goal of life is perfect peace, why is this heinous act (*ghora-karma*) at the beginning? Why should he not at once begin the peaceful life? Throughout the discourse Kṛṣṇa never fails to point out the highest goal of life to Arjuna: 'With the mind concentrated by *yoga* and with an attitude of evenness towards all things, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self'.[11] 'Alike in pleasure and pain, established in the Self, regarding a clod of earth, a stone or gold alike, the same to the loved and unloved, steady, the same to censure and praise, to honour and disgrace and to friend and foe, relinquishing all undertakings—such a person is said to have transcended the *guṇas*.'[12] But at the same time, specially in the concluding discourse, he constantly reminds Arjuna that his present duty is to fight: 'If through self-conceit you think that you will not fight, vain is this resolve; your very nature will constrain you'.[13] He, however, advises Arjuna to neutralize the binding effects of action by undertaking it unselfishly—dedicating its fruits to the Lord. He calls it the 'secret of work'.[14]

People generally hold two views regarding Karma-yoga. They are either for work with its fruits, or for total abstention from work. They think that when you take up work, it is impossible for you to give up its

[10] *B.G.*, VI. 23.
[11] *Ibid.*, VI. 29.
[12] *Ibid.*, XIV. 24-25. The three constituents of Prakṛti or primal matter.
[13] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 59.
[14] *Ibid.*, II. 50.

fruits. So, if you are to attain the highest state, you must eschew work altogether and be a *sannyāsin*, for none can work without some motive. Kṛṣṇa says again and again that it is absolutely useless to give up external actions, until you have been able to give up desires also. So the proper course for a man to follow is, according to him, to take up the duties of life as they are, and try to do them with the highest motive, the attainment of the Lord. And for this, man has to pass through certain physical, mental, and moral disciplines, which are elaborated in the different *yogas*. And when he will attain the highest stage, all action will drop off by itself—, 'the man who is devoted to the Self, and is satisfied with Self, and content in the Self alone, has no duty'.[15]

KṚṢṆA AND THE BUDDHA

The Hindu life is divided into four *āśramas*. The Hindus believe also that the human soul passes through many different bodies, until it reaches perfection. So one may view that there is no hurry in the pursuit of perfection. But reformers like the great Buddha, who were mainly guided by their heart, wanted people to realize that perfection as soon as possible, and so they tried to revolutionize society by their fervent appeal to take at once to the direct path of liberation, and thus created a large sect of monks and nuns, and we know the result. Kṛṣṇa had a wonderful intellect and heart combined, and though we sometimes find his heart getting uppermost—as in that beautiful episode of his life, the *Vṛndāvana-līlā*, where he mixes freely with men and women of a humble caste and draws them to the highest state by his unspeakable charm and love—in his maturer years we find his intellect predominant, when he tries to lead the whole society to the highest goal by allowing everyone to do his own duties (*svadharma*), only asking him to give up the worldly motive behind them. Very few people can devote themselves to meditation alone, giving up work entirely. With those rare souls who can do so, Kṛṣṇa has no quarrel. But he has in his mind's eye the mass of people who cannot think of life as free from work, and who, when they meet or hear about some rare souls that have devoted themselves exclusively to meditation, are tempted to follow them, but unfortunately do not succeed in their attempt, nay, run the risk of falling into abject torpidity (*tamas*). He considers Arjuna to be a typical example of these. At the same time he knows the dangers of a life of mere action, and so his exhortations include the teachings of highest meditation, knowledge, and devotion.

[15] *Ibid.*, III. 17.

HARMONY OF FAITHS AND PHILOSOPHIES

Kṛṣṇa was a preacher of the harmony of faiths. Though attempts have been made by commentators to fit all his teachings into particular systems according to their view-points, an impartial student will find hints of all the different schools of Vedānta such as the monistic (Advaita), quasi-monistic (Viśiṣṭādvaita), and dualistic (Dvaita) in them: for example, 'Know Me, O descendant of Bharata, to be the *Kṣetrajña* (self) in all *kṣetras* (bodies)',[16] on which the Advaitin Śaṅkara has written an elaborate commentary; the passage, 'He who sees Me in all things, and sees all things in Me, never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separate from him'[17] may well fit in with the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy of life; and 'Relinquishing all duties (*dharmas*), take refuge in Me alone, and I will liberate you from all sins, grieve not'[18] is a dualistic passage, pure and simple, and it looks like the Christian doctrine of redemption through grace. As to philosophy, Kṛṣṇa does not observe any rigid distinction between Vedānta and Sāṁkhya, and encourages men to come to the goal by whatever path they like: 'Howsoever people may take refuge in Me, I accept them through that path'.[19] He has no quarrel even with the worship of the manes (*pitṛs*) or gods (*devas*) or with external ritualistic worship, but even here he emphasizes concentration and devotion as essential. 'If anybody offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that devout gift of the pure-minded I accept.'[20]

The doctrine of Divine Incarnation in the *Gītā* need not be interpreted in a narrow sense. It merely points to the Vedāntic doctrine of the divinity of man and acknowledges the possibility of divine manifestation whenever virtue subsides and irreligion prevails.[21] Every object which turns our mind towards the highest truth is admitted as a special power (*vibhūti*) of the Lord, and the last verse of the chapter of the *Gītā* in which these *vibhūtis* are enumerated ends significantly with the words: 'Or what is the use of knowing all this diversity, O Arjuna? (Know that) I exist, supporting the whole world with a portion of Myself.'[22] This is elaborated in the eleventh chapter in Arjuna's vision of the Lord's all-comprising universal form. Where, then, is the room for narrowness or exclusiveness, for in the state of spiritual ecstasy does not one actually see with divine eyes that the whole universe is nothing but the Lord?

Reference has already been made in passing to Sri Ramakrishna's remarkable achievement in the realm of harmony. In his life we actually

[16] *Ibid.*, XIII. 2.
[17] *Ibid.*, VI. 30.
[18] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 66.
[19] *Ibid.*, IV. 11.
[20] *Ibid.*, IX. 26.
[21] *Ibid.*, IV. 7.
[22] *Ibid.*, X. 42.

find him practising the doctrines and methods of every form of religion with which he came into contact, including Mohammedanism and Christianity. He followed the external forms of those religions in their minutest detail, for he used to say that a grain of rice without its husk could not develop into a plant. Yet in his interpretation of the *Gītā* he emphasized the aspect of renunciation. There is, however, no contradiction in this. Renunciation of the ego can well go hand in hand with intense activity for the sake of others. The example of Swami Vivekananda, the monk *par excellence* and at the same time preacher of the worship of *nara-nārāyaṇa* (God in the form of man), helps us to understand the utterance of Sri Ramakrishna in its proper light.

PERFECTION THROUGH RESIGNATION TO GOD

Resignation to the divine will (*śaraṇāgati*) is another outstanding topic in the *Gītā*. Says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'Take refuge in Him with all your heart, O Bhārata ; by His grace you will attain supreme peace and an eternal abode'.[23] The *Gītā* tries to raise the aspirant (*sādhaka*) to such a height of spirituality that he ultimately finds himself only to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord. For the attainment of this state of resignation he is required to eliminate more and more of his egoism, till he feels just as the Lord says, 'By Me alone have they already been slain ; be merely an apparent cause, O Savyasācin (=Arjuna)'.[24] The author of the *Gītā* seems to believe that it is possible to work without the feeling of egoism and attachment. Consider the verse, 'He who is free from the notion of egoism, whose intellect is not affected (by good or evil), kills not, though (outwardly) he may kill these people, nor is he bound (by the action)'.[25] This is a great doctrine liable to much misinterpretation ; but the great teacher does not refrain from giving utterance to it only for that reason. The standards of judgement of the actions of an ordinary man and those of a superman are not the same. A question may here be pertinently asked, Whether any sort of action is possible when a person attains perfection through resignation? Different opinions seem to be held by different commentators. Some say that in that state no activities are possible, while others hold the opposite view. The former group tries to explain away the scriptural assertion of the possibility of action by saying that such mention of activity is only by way of extolling the highest state. It is technically known as *arthavāda* (eulogy). The controversy can be set at rest only when one has actually risen to that state. The scriptures mention many distinguishing marks

[23] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 62. See also XVIII. 66, already quoted.
[24] *Ibid.*, XI. 33.
[25] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 17.

of a perfect man. But these are not always dependable, because sometimes even the worst persons seem to possess them. So it is said that the highest state is only known to one's own self (*sva-saṁvedya*). But is there no chance of self-delusion? Yes, there is. Still in spite of the existence of such self-deluded individuals, one cannot help accepting the fact that there are actually such rare souls as have attained spiritual perfection. To be an instrument in the hands of the Lord, no doubt, implies some sort of dualism. Since the Lord is the only thing that exists, where is the occasion for one to be an instrument of another? This, however, can be reconciled if we take the expression in a figurative sense, or as indicating merely a stage on the road to ultimate fulfilment.

The *Gītā* epitomizes the teachings of the Upaniṣads. In the Upaniṣads we may trace the growth of religious ideas; from the lowest idea we find there the conceptions of religion mounting higher and higher, till at last we come to the highest. In the *Gītā*, on the other hand, we find the various results of religious researches combined, harmonized, and presented in such a beautiful fashion that before it a person, of whatever spiritual pursuit, feels himself in divine presence, as it were, and beholds his aspirations and beliefs given expression to by a master mind. This is the reason why the *Gītā* is so popular with all sections of the Hindus, as well as with those followers of other religions who have an acquaintance with Hindu religious literature.

11

THE RELIGION OF THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

THE *Bhagavad-Gītā* contains the highest experience of the Hindu mind on the nature of man and his place in the universe. Of all the great texts of Hindu religious literature, it is perhaps the most popular and at the same time the most profound. While it is thought to be simple enough to be studied and quoted by even a tiro in Hindu religion and philosophy, it has also the merit of having been considered a fitting scripture by the great philosopher teachers of Mediaeval India like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, and Madhusūdana for writing erudite commentaries upon. Distinguished leaders and scholars of modern India, like Tilak, Gandhi, and Aurobindo, also have written their masterpieces on the *Gītā*. Its teachings begin as an attempt to solve the conflict[1] in the mind of Arjuna, resulting from the urge to wage a sanguinary war as a matter of duty, and the opposite feeling that war is an unmitigated evil. In resolving the conflict, the divine teacher of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had to trace various ethical problems to their metaphysical roots, and to expound important practical disciplines for curing the ills of the soul; and therefore it has turned out to be a résume of the philosophies, ethical systems, and schools of spiritual culture that existed at the time.

METAPHYSICS OF THE GĪTĀ

The world-view presented by the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is unmistakably one of unity of all with the supreme Deity[2]; it is not, however, the pantheistic doctrine of equating the Deity with the universe; it does not negate the distinction of all that exists with the Deity. This idea of a distinction without a basic difference between the Deity and the universe is maintained by a doctrine of manifestation, according to which the Deity projects the universe out of Himself and reabsorbs it unto Himself; and this doctrine of manifestation centres round the concept of Prakṛti, which is both the power and the stuff of manifestation. The concept of Prakṛti originally formulated by the Sāṁkhya philosophy was modified to suit the theistic and devotional teachings of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* resolved the absolute difference and opposition between Prakṛti and Puruṣas declared in the Sāṁkhya system by recognizing the two principles as the manifestation of the one Divine Nature (*daivī* Prakṛti) known also as *māyā* and *svabhāva*.

[1] *B.G.*, I. 21-47.

[2] *Ibid.*, VII. 19.

In this synthetic view, Puruṣa is described as the higher Nature (*parā* Prakṛti) and Prakṛti proper as the lower Nature (*aparā* Prakṛti) of the supreme Deity. As in the Sāṁkhya, in the *Gītā* too—but qualified here as *aparā*—Prakṛti forms the substance of all physical evolution. It is constituted of three inseparable *guṇas* or modes called *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas* —which are to be treated both as substance and quality, as it would appear from their physical and psychological effects. Of these, *sattva* expresses itself as the force of equilibrium, *rajas* as that of activity, and *tamas* as that of inertia, on the physical level; and on the mental, they express themselves as knowledge, passion, and indolence, respectively.

All evolution takes place by the agitation of these three *guṇas* of the homogeneous, undifferentiated Prakṛti, which as a result, comes to have an eightfold division into the primordial elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, understanding, and self-consciousness. From these elemental substances, forms of matter, life, and mind are produced, and finally they dissolve into them. This cosmic manifestation is cyclic in its process and resembles the daily life of a person: during the waking hours of the day, his private universe is in a state of manifestation; but at night when he sleeps, it dissolves into his mind, and comes out again when he wakes up. So also during the daytime of Brahmā, the creator, which lasts for a thousand *yugas* (ages), the world that is commonly experienced by creatures is in a manifested state; but during his night that will follow and last for an equally long time, it will be dissolved again into Prakṛti, only to manifest again when his day will begin. This alternation of creation and dissolution, each lasting for enormous periods of time, continues as the eternal cyclic process of Nature. But Nature is not an independent or self-sufficient entity in the *Gītā*; it is only the executive Power of the supreme Deity.[3] The lower Nature, or the Prakṛti proper from which matter and its combinations proceed, is in a state of constant change; and in contrast with it, there is the changeless individual spirit, the Jīva, called the higher Nature of the Deity.[4] These Jīvas correspond to the Puruṣas in the Sāṁkhya system of thought, which holds that they are many; the *Gītā,* too, accepts the multiplicity of the Jīvas (individual spirits), but adds that they are all *aṁśas* (parts) of the Universal Spirit enmeshed, as it were, in the physical and mental limitations imposed by the lower Nature described above.[5] The individual spirit is caught in the weary round of birth and rebirth in this world and in higher and lower ones, as determined by the residue of actions done in the previous births. From this process Indian Philosophy adduces the well-known law of Karma and the

[3] *Ibid.*, IX. 7-10. [4] *Ibid.*, VII. 5-6. [5] *Ibid.*, VIII. 33, XV. 7-8.

theory of transmigration. In all the transmigratory embodiments of the Jīva, it is the body and the mind that change for worse or attain higher refinement. The spirit remains unchanged, revealing its glory the more, the more the body and the mind become refined.[6]

Why and when this cyclic process of the world began and the Eternal Portion of the Lord—*mamaivāṁśaḥ sanātanaḥ*—became originally subjected to the law of Karma are not discussed in the *Gītā*. When the changing (*kṣara*) and the unchanging (*akṣara*) categories of existence are described as the lower and higher Nature of the Lord, they are taken as ultimate and so requiring no further explanation. To the person who is obsessed with the question of his own origin, the *Gītā* suggests[7] that it is ignorance that makes the imperishable spirit think itself to be the perishable body, and that it is the nature of ignorance to make one ignorant of one's origin. Therefore the man seeking emancipation is asked to dispel ignorance by proper spiritual culture,[8] and to be free from the bondage of Prakṛti.

The material principle designated as *aparā* Prakṛti is expounded as *kṣara bhāva*, and the soul principle as the unchanging aspect, *akṣara bhāva*, of the supreme Being; and in contrast with these the *Gītā* places the transcendent Puruṣottama aspect of the Supreme originating, controlling, and directing everything.[9] A presentation of this type naturally raises the question of the relationship between these three categories—the *kṣara*, the *akṣara*, and the Puruṣottama. In a doctrine of unity, having 'all this is Vāsudeva' as its watchword, the *kṣara* and the *akṣara* have to be taken either as real or as apparent manifestation of the one supreme Puruṣottama. Though from the point of view of common logic, these two positions are contradictory, the synthetic teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* does not recognize it as such, because to the all-embracing Consciousness of the Puruṣottama the manifestation of Prakṛti is only apparent; His being is absolutely unaffected by it.[10]

There are statements in the *Gītā* which imply the doctrine of *vivarta*, or illusory transformation, on the basis of which alone the absolute non-contact between the supreme Deity and the universe born of Him can be explained logically. But beyond implying it, the *Gītā*, being essentially a book of devotion and conduct, does not develop the doctrine, perhaps on the ground that it has no practical significance to the ordinary man. For the Jīva struggling with the problems of life and seeking release from bondage, transformation of Prakṛti is a fact of experience, which it will be mere sophistry on his part to deny. So in its main teachings the *Gītā*

[6] *Ibid.*, II. 20-22. [7] *Ibid.*, V. 15. [8] *Ibid.*, XV. 1-5.
[9] *Ibid.*, XV. 16-19. [10] *Ibid.*, IX. 5, VII. 12.

ignores the doctrine of illusory transformation or apparent manifestation, and concentrates upon the unity of everything in the supreme Deity. The world of matter and life, constituting His lower and higher nature respectively, is revealed to the spiritual vision[11] granted to Arjuna as forming the divine body of Vāsudeva, the Omniform.

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE SUPREME DEITY

One of the principal features of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is its vivid and impressive portrayal of the all-embracing Deity: He is the Universal Being enveloping all—His hands and feet everywhere, His head, eyes, and mouths facing all directions, and His ears turned to all sides. He seems to possess the faculties of all the senses and yet He is devoid of all senses. He is unattached and yet sustains all things. He is free from the *guṇas* of Nature and yet enjoys them. He is within and without all beings. He has no movements and yet He moves. He is too subtle to be known. He is far away and yet He is near. He is undivided and yet He is, as it were, divided among beings. He is to be known as the sustainer of all creation. He is the mighty Spirit, the all-knowing and all-embracing intelligence, a speck of whose glory is manifested as the wonderful universe. From His limitless splendour is derived all that is grand, beautiful, and strong. He is the vital force that sustains all life. At the end of a cycle all beings are dissolved in His Nature, and at the beginning of the next, He generates them again. Controlling Nature which is His own, He sends forth again and again this multitude of beings helplessly bound by the *guṇas* (constituents) of Nature. He is also Time, the Destroyer of everything. Like the water of the river rushing towards the sea, like moths flitting into the fire, the whole universe is hastening towards Him to meet its sure and certain doom. The Light of all lights, He is above all darkness. The brilliance of the sun, the moon, and the fire is His; He is the knowing principle within all beings. He is seated in the hearts of creatures, and from Him are memory and knowledge and their loss as well.

Though unborn, eternal, and the Lord of all beings, the God of righteousness embodies Himself through His mysterious power whenever there is decline of righteousness and outbreak of unrighteousness, in order that He may protect the good, destroy the evil-doers, and establish the rule of righteousness. From age to age He incarnates Himself for the good of mankind; and those who really understand with faith and devotion His births and achievements attain spiritual illumination and release. Though His Nature creates bondage and He as Time destroys all, yet He is also related to the human soul by the bonds of love and pity. He is the

[11] *Ibid.*, XI. 13.



father of the worlds—of all that move and all that do not move. The greatest of teachers and the supreme object of worship, there is none equal to Him. Yet He bears with those who seek refuge in Him, as a father does with a son, a friend with a friend, and a lover with the beloved. He is the father, the mother, the supporter, the grandsire, the refuge, and the friend of the universe. All beings are the same to Him, and to none is He averse or partial. But those who worship Him with devotion are in Him and He is in them. It is evident from the above description that the picturesque and forceful phraseology of the *Gītā* gives a new content to the hackneyed concept of theology.

There are two types of beings in the universe, the *daiva* (divine) and *āsura* (diabolic). Those belonging to the former are endowed with knowledge, devotion, purity, self-control, humility, compassion, and non-covetousness, and they gravitate towards Him ; those belonging to the latter type devote themselves solely to the pursuit of pleasure, power, and self-aggrandizement, and become cruel and unrighteous, and as a consequence they lose Him and degrade themselves to the lowest state. But even they are not beyond the range of His grace ; for however sinful a man might be, if he becomes repentant and takes refuge in Him, His grace descends on him, and he is quickly transformed into a righteous man. True devotion and purity of heart alone will please Him, and if a man endowed with these traits piously offers Him even a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or some water, He accepts them. He is the recipient of all sacrifices and austerities, and the Lord of all the worlds and friend of all creatures. Devotees who have understood that He is the origin of all, worship Him with all their heart. They find rest in Him and become delighted and satisfied solely by His thought. On them He bestows that dispassionate understanding which enables them to reach Him. Out of compassion for them He dwells in their hearts and dispels the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom. He saves them very soon from the ocean of mortal life, and He safeguards all their interests here and hereafter.

The supreme Deity of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is thus God of righteousness and love. But here the recognition of personality in the Deity is not allowed to degrade Him into a person—a jealous and narrow tribal God. He is known and worshipped under many names and many forms. 'Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I accept them', says the God of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 'for whatever path they may choose, is Mine in all respects'.[12] Even those who worship gods other than the Universal Being are not condemned, though the limitations of their worship are clearly pointed out.[13]

[12] *Ibid.*, IV. 11.

[13] *Ibid.*, VII. 20-23, IX. 23-24.

RELEASE ACCORDING TO THE GITĀ

The metaphysics and theology of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* do not form an end. They are linked to life, and they give the central truth by the realization of which alone the highest human goal[14] is gained. Holding that the discharge of one's duty is the highest law of life, the *Gītā* exhorts the Kṣatriya warrior with the words, 'If thou art slain in war, thou wilt obtain heaven ; if victorious, thou wilt enjoy the earth' ; such a doctrine cannot support a weak cowardly recoiling from sufferings. It must, however, be remembered that the *Gītā* condemns excessive attachment to power and the pleasures of life,[15] as they destroy the spiritual tendencies in man. The *Gītā* condemns the *āsurī* (diabolic) tendency in no uncertain terms. Life is to be loved not for the pleasures it gives, but for the opportunities it offers for man's higher evolution, and the summit of this evolution is reached when the Jīva is freed from his bondage to the senses and the body, and finds peace born of union with the supreme Deity. The aim of life, according to the *Gītā*, is the attainment of *Brāhmī sthiti* (union with Brahman)—a state in which man is released from the slavery of the senses, becomes absolutely fearless, perfectly detached, full of bliss and love for all beings, and an instrument fit for the good of all. This state is attained only by a complete change in outlook and temperament brought about by right knowledge, right action, and right concentration. *Mokṣa* (liberation) is essentially this state of peace ; and cessation from birth and death is only its concomitant. In the view of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, happiness, which all men seek, is gained not through the enjoyment of the senses, but through their control,[16] and it is not worthwhile to hanker after pleasures of the world, because they are impermanent[17] and devoid of the chief prerequisite of happiness, namely, peace.[18] *Mokṣa* on the other hand is eternal, gives peace in this life, and puts an end to rebirth.[19] Being essentially the art of living in peace, it is an attainment of this world, its eschatological implications being only its necessary accompaniments.[20]

The man who has attained *mokṣa* in this very life and is established in peace, is described[21] in the *Gītā* by various epithets: *sthitaprajña* (a man of steady intelligence), *triguṇātīta* (a man who has overcome the three *guṇas*), a *bhakta* (a lover of God), a *jñānin* (an enlightened person), or a *yogin* (one united with God). The *jīvanmukta* (liberated-in-life) possesses sense-control, non-attachment, equality of vision, God-consciousness, and supreme peace (*parā-śāntiḥ*) here, and an everlasting abode hereafter (*sthānaṁ śāśvatam*). This is the *summum bonum* of life, and it results

[14] *Ibid.*, VII. 29, IX. 33.
[15] *Ibid.*, II. 44.
[16] *Ibid.*, II. 62-66.
[17] *Ibid.*, IX. 33.
[18] *Ibid.*, II. 66.
[19] *Ibid.*, VI. 15.
[20] *Ibid.*, V. 19-23.
[21] *Ibid.*, II. 55-72, XIV. 20-26, XII. 13-20, etc.

from the realization of the true nature of man and the universe, described earlier. The ethical and psychological teachings of the *Gītā* are only aids to this realization.

BONDAGE ACCORDING TO THE GĪTĀ

The *Gītā* makes it clear that *ajñāna* (ignorance) is the root cause of man's sufferings.[22] Deluded by ignorance, man forgets he is the Ātman (spirit) and thinks himself to be none other than the material vehicle of Prakṛti in which he is embodied as a transmigrating soul, and as a result he is bound by the *guṇas*.[23] For out of the *guṇas* of Nature the *kṣetra*,[24] or the psycho-physical organization that we call personality, is produced. They form the medium through which ignorance operates in the moral life of man, and ignorance expressed in moral life is called sin. To the question, 'What impels a man to commit sin in spite of himself, driven, as it were, by force?'[25] The answer is given in an elaborate analysis of moral degeneracy. There is a detailed description[26] of the diabolic type in whom the sinful tendency predominates and kills the moral sense altogether. If the metaphysical and moral consequences of ignorance are disastrous, the spiritual effect of it is no less so. The sense of egoity and the pull of his sinful nature engender in the Jīva a propensity to appropriate for himself what really belongs to the Almighty. But really the universe is only the form of the *supreme* Lord; and the spiritual and the material principles of the universe are only His higher and lower Nature. Ignorance hides this truth from the Jīva, and so he becomes utterly unmindful of the Divine and considers the ego as all in all; he forgets that he is a part of the Whole and that all that he wrongfully calls his own, including his physical and mental energies, really belong to the supreme Being who is the Whole.[27] Man is only like a cell in the body Divine; the cell may have a life, but that life is only an expression of the life of the whole, and if the cell claims itself to be the whole body, it is committing a grave error. Similarly, if the individual being feels that the actions of his body and mind and their results he owes to himself, it causes disharmony between himself and the Whole, because he as a part cannot appropriate to himself what belongs to the Whole. This disharmony is the source of desire and anger and the consequent restlessness, which can cease only when the ego is merged in the Divine. But man lives satisfied with his life of ignorance, taking its excitements for happiness, until some severe shock to his physical or moral life makes him perceive its limitation, and turn him towards the Divine.[28]

[22] *Ibid.*, V. 15.
[23] *Ibid.*, XIV. 6-13.
[24] *Ibid.*, XIII. 5, 6, III. 42
[25] *Ibid.*, III. 36-40.
[26] *Ibid.*, XVI.
[27] *Ibid.*, III. 27.
[28] *Ibid.*, VII. 16, XVI. 1-20, XIV. 17, 18.

THE IDEAL OF YOGA IN THE GITA

Two distinct types of spiritual aspirants are mentioned in the *Gītā*—the *sāṁkhya* and the *yogin*, representing roughly the philosophical and the devotional type of aspirants. An aspirant who belongs to the former type is a votary of the Absolute ;[29] he relies mainly on self-effort and his discipline consists in the control of the senses, abstract intellectual analysis, and meditation ; one belonging to the later type accepts and is attached to the Divine Personality ; he practises loving devotion to Him, serves Him by doing work in a spirit of dedication, and mainly depends on Divine grace, though he does not relax in self-effort. While accepting the distinction between these two types, the *Gītā* maintains that their ultimate aim is identical.[30] But it warns spiritual aspirants about the greater difficulty that is to be encountered by those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest Absolute, the reason being that the goal can be reached only with very great difficulty by persons attached to the body,[31] and they are also reminded that without the *yoga* of training in selfless action, the Sāṁkhya ideal of renunciation is hard to attain.[32]

The main teachings of the *Gītā*, therefore, relate to that *yoga* which is a harmonious combination of devotion, action, concentration, and knowledge. Leaving aside the pure *sāṁkhya* type of aspirants as exceptional, the *Gītā* emphatically asserts the necessity[33] of proper work in a scheme of harmonious spiritual growth.

Work has different motives and is of different kinds: animals and slaves work out of external compulsion ; ordinary men work for profit ; work in these instances does not serve a spiritual purpose. For spiritualizing work, the *Gītā* therefore propounds the sacrificial conception of it, *yajñārtham karma*.[34] Sacrifice, according to the *Gītā*, may be interpreted as the law of all higher life and developments ; the underlying principle of such sacrifice is the surrender of one's precious possessions and achievements for the service of God. That is why the *Gītā* mentions sacrifice of wealth, of austerities, of sense-control, of knowledge, and of work.[35] Of these, work that is done as a sacrifice is called also *niṣkāma-karma* ; it is the special theme of the *Gītā* and the distinctive feature of the *yoga*[36] it teaches. If an action has to conform to the *Gītā* standard, it has to be desireless, dispassionate, and dedicated to the Divine. Desirelessness here means that the action is not motivated by selfish gain. An action can be dispassionate only if it is not preceded or succeeded by disturbances of passions like greed, hatred, jealousy, and the rest. Complete self-mastery

[29] *Ibid.*, XII. 3-5.
[30] *Ibid.*, XII. 4.
[31] *Ibid.*, XII. 5.
[32] *Ibid.*, V. 6.
[33] *Ibid.*, III. 4-16.
[34] *Ibid.*, III. 9.
[35] *Ibid.*, IV. 28.
[36] *Ibid.*, II. 47, III. 19-20, 25, VI. 1.

is necessary for this, and this is possible only to the extent that a man understands the distinction between Puruṣa and Prakṛti[37] and recognizes all action as belonging to Prakṛti.

While this perception and the consequent freedom from egoistic reactions come only at a very high level of striving, a relative control over the subtle workings of desire is absolutely necessary for practising the *Gītā* ideal of work. The term *'saṅkalpa'* in the *Gītā* implies the sources of desires that lies in the subtle fancies about future plans and brooding over their results. This rudiments of desire has to be eliminated[38] through the gradual transformation of the aspirants' whole outlook by assimilating thoroughly the philosophical doctrines of the *Gītā*, and by re-educating his subconscious mind by the practice of reflection and concentration. In other words, dispassionateness in the midst of action can be attained only through the practice of the disciplines of knowledge and concentration. The material and mental aspects of Nature being the body of the Deity, all actions, even those done by Jīvas with the sense of individual agency, are really done by Him ; individuals are only His tools to work out His will. The enlightened man who is not blinded by ignorance experiences this truth, and he feels that there is no place for any egoistic impulse in his view of things. For the aspirant who is yet in ignorance, the ego and the freedom of will are, however, facts of experience which it will be vain to ignore. The sense of free will especially is a source of moral protection for him in his spiritual infancy. He cannot therefore deny it outright, but he should transform it by performing all his duties as an offering to the supreme Lord. Recognizing that all his powers of action come from Him, he offers up their fruits to Him and never feels vain over his deeds. Performance of action in such a spirit is, according to the *Gītā*,[39] a purely devotional act and constitutes the highest form of sacrifice. It should thus be seen that the *Gītā* ideal of *niṣkāma-karma* is essentially a spiritual ideal which presupposes the simultaneous practice of the other disciplines, the culture of the will, the intellect, and the emotions, which it calls Abhyāsa-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, and Bhakti-yoga. In their final development, though all these *yogas* merge in the early stages, each has its distinctive value.

THE THREE YOGAS

A brief reference to these three disciplines is in place here. Abhyāsa-yoga[40] is the act of subjective concentration. While social life is the field of dedicated action, solitude is the sphere for engaging oneself in Abhyāsa-

[37] *Ibid.*, III. 27, V. 8-9. [38] *Ibid.*, VI. 2. [39] *Ibid.*, XII. 12, IX. 24, 27.
[40] *Ibid.*, VI. 10-28.

yoga. The attainment of the final end of this *yoga* is not often possible in the span of one life. After considerable sincere effort, despairing of success, the mind of the *yogin* may wander away from the path of *yoga*. No sincere effort is, however, lost, because the momentum of past striving takes the *yogin* nearer the goal. The practice of concentration enjoined on the *yogin* has incidental value in so far as it is a great help in following the *Gītā* ideal of work. It is only the daily practice of it that can steady and deepen the devotional attitude of the mind, which engenders in the spiritual aspirant detachment and the sacrificial sense, without which the *Gītā* ideal of action cannot be practised.

Jñāna-yoga, the path of knowledge, advocates the method of discriminating between the real and the unreal, refusing to accept anything other than the one Reality. *Jñāna* in the *Gītā* does not stop with the intellectual understanding of philosophical problems; it is illumination accompanying the attainment of God.[41] It is particularly noteworthy that the term *jñāna* is used in the *Gītā* to indicate the practices and qualities that are helpful towards the attainment of the goal.[42] A less elaborate, but more precise, description of the means for the attainment of *jñāna* is given in an earlier chapter,[43] where the qualities of *śraddhā* (fervent faith) and sense-control are stressed. *Śraddhā* denotes a burning faith combined with reverence, humility, and profound sincerity of purpose. One who has this trait will not rest satisfied until his ideals have been realized. To begin with, it may be based on partial understanding only, but it is sustained by the certainty of conviction and genuine hope. This may look like blind acceptance, but the person concerned justifies it on the basis of his trust in the scriptures and teachers, which occupies the central place in his faith. But really a person's *śraddhā* is determined by his character, or rather by the kinship between his character[44] and the nature of the object of his faith. Those who are endowed with a materialistic and hedonistic outlook (*āsurī sampad*) feel an antipathy to things spiritual, while those who possess a godly nature (*daivī sampad*) feel a kinship with them. It is this kinship and the consequent urge from within that generate the required degree of sincerity of purpose in the man who is endowed with *śraddhā*, and makes him a power in the sphere of his activity.[45] The *Gītā* therefore maintains that an aspirant after divine wisdom must have *śraddhā* in his spiritual teacher[46] and in the scriptures that give him an intellectual idea of the goal he seeks. It is the knowledge gained through faith that becomes knowledge by experience when *jñāna* dawns on an aspirant.

41 *Ibid.*, IV. 33, 35-38.
42 *Ibid.*, XIII. 7-11.
43 *Ibid.*, IV. 39.
44 *Ibid.*, XVII 3.
45 *Ibid.*, XVII. 3.
46 *Ibid.*, IV. 34.

One other important virtue that all spiritual aspirants should cultivate is the control of the senses. The senses are the openings through which our desires draw their food; and as such it is only through the control of the senses that one can prevent sense contacts from stimulating the desires, which have been described in the *Gītā* as man's real enemies and the gateway leading him to hell. It is pointed out that a mind which runs after the roving senses carries away the discrimination of man as the wind carries away a boat from its course. The stages by which this process of moral degradation takes place is analysed step by step and the method for its prevention is clearly laid down.[47] It is impossible to control the senses after they have been allowed to stir a person's instinctive energies powerfully and created an infatuation in his mind. An attempt to control the senses at that stage would be a 'repression' in modern psychological parlance, and the *Gītā* discourages it.[48] Healthy control is, however, different from repression, the nature of which is thus described: 'Attachment and aversion of the senses for their respective objects are natural: let none come under the sway of these two; they are his foes'.[49] To safeguard oneself against coming under their sway, one has to be vigilant over one's senses, mind, and understanding, for depending on these, desires delude the aspirant,[50] and therefore first the senses are to be guarded. The process by which one should prevent the senses being dominated by their respective objects is indicated by means of the tortoise analogy.[51] When one has gained mastery over oneself by this process of withdrawal, objects cannot stir the instincts and cloud the understanding. The *Gītā* brings out this truth vividly with the help of the ocean analogy.[52]

It is possible only for the adept to maintain unperturbed poise of mind like the ocean, which is constant in spite of the perpetual supply of water by many rivers. For the beginner, however, the hedge of protection lies in avoiding exciting contacts with the objects of the senses. Only he should understand that by avoidance he has not mastered his senses, but just taken the first step towards it; such avoidance must be looked upon as a protecting enclosure for the infant plant of his spiritual life. Total sublimation alone can wipe out all the subtle tendencies and effect a permanent transformation of his nature.[53] So, if sense-control is a means to *jñāna*, it is only with the dawn of *jñāna* that perfect self-control is gained. This mutual dependence indicates that practice of self-control and pursuit of knowledge must go side by side.

[47] *Ibid.*, II. 61, 62.
[48] *Ibid.*, III. 33.
[49] *Ibid.*, III. 34.
[50] *Ibid.*, III. 40.
[51] *Ibid.*, II. 58.
[52] *Ibid.*, II. 70.
[53] *Ibid.*, II. 59.

THE BHAKTI YOGA

It has been shown that in the *Gītā,* action, practice of concentration, and knowledge are but different phases of the one *yoga* which it inculcates, and that they do not form water-tight compartments. The dominating factor which effects the unity of these diverse strands of the inner life, is the expetience of whole-hearted devotion to the supreme Lord, which is taught in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end of the *Bhagavad-Gītā.* The special quality of the *Gītā* teachings on the other *yogas* is derived from their blend with its teachings on devotion to the supreme Deity. Devotion in the *Gītā* is the sentiment of love towards God born of an understanding of His Nature and the Jīva's true relationship with Him; it expresses itself as the surrender of the devotee's entire being to the Supreme Deity and the discharge of his duties in a spirit of dedication to Him. A synthetic scripture like the *Gītā* does not take any partisan view on the question whether *jñāna* precedes *bhakti* or *vice versa*; it does not find any opposition between the two. Both are recognized to be mutually complementary. Love of God is based on, and fostered by, some preliminary knowledge of His Nature.[54] Such knowledge, with which devotional life starts, is born of *śraddhā.* In the higher stages of knowledge also, the *Gītā* considers devotion and knowledge to be interdependent.[55] Realization of the experience formulated in 'All this is Vāsudeva', and perfect self-surrender are shown[56] to be the result of mature knowledge. This realization comes to the aspirant as a result of Divine grace, which is essentially a corollary of devotion and the consequence of the supreme devotional act of self-surrender, to which the divine teacher of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* exhorts all devotees.[57] The growth of devotion up to this stage of full enlightenment through grace is also described fully.[58]

True love of God originates from a knowledge of the Lord's glory and greatness; it is fostered and converted into a flaming energy by *niṣkāma-karma,* Abhyāsa-yoga, and Jñāna-yoga. When love deepens and ends in absolute self-surrender, the grace of God descends on the aspirants; this destroys the distinction between *bhakti* and *jñāna* by bringing both to their common end of experience of God, in which to know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to know Him. This experience comes when grace destroys the cloud of ignorance and, with it, the stain of sin that has its seat in the senses, the mind, and the intellect. The aspirant is then said to enter into Him forthwith—his life becomes one with the Divine Life. He may take full part in all the activities of the world, but he

[54] *Ibid.*, X. 8.
[55] *Ibid.*, VII. 17-19.
[56] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 55.
[57] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 66.
[58] *Ibid.*, X. 7-11.

always abides in God, and to him belong 'Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode'.[59]

LOKA-SAṀGRAHA

The teachings of the *Gītā* have been reviewed in their different aspects. In conclusion, it is necessary to focus attention particularly on the place of action in spiritual life, as it has led to some controversy. That *niṣkāma-karma* is an inescapable part of the spiritual discipline taught in the *Gītā*, has amply been demonstrated. Some interpreters hold that this is true only in the early stages of spiritual life, that is, until the mind has been purified; but after that work has to be abandoned so that the aspirant might devote himself exclusively to contemplation or other subjective disciplines. It is necessary to examine how far it is correct. It is quite clear that the *Gītā* distinguishes between two stages of spiritual growth and that it recognizes also a difference of discipline relating to them.[60] The counsel of selfless activity for the aspirant and serenity for the man of realization, the latter being free from all desires[61] and so actionless and disinterested in the objects of the senses, directly declares that until the attainment of *yoga*, spiritual progress is positively barred if dedicated action is not practised, and that pure psychological disciplines are the means to be adopted afterwards for further advancement. The stages of this advancement and the nature of the disciplines required for them are elaborately taught,[62] ending with the experience of the aspirant who attains the final goal.

Consistent with the division of spiritual progress into two stages, as stated above, we get in this description the special duties of each in these two stages. In the first stage of the aspirant, he discharges his duties as worship of the supreme Lord; in the second stage as the man of realization, he trains his mind in direct communion. But does this categorization mean that the *Gītā* thereby recommends the total giving up of all work, or institutionalizes worklessness as a stage or order in life? Other passages of a very definite and conclusive nature deny this.[63] These two sets of apparently divergent passages are to be reconciled before the conclusive view of the *Gītā* on the point raised is arrived at. Such a reconciliation is possible in this manner: The two stages of spiritual development connoted by the terms *ārurukṣu* (wishing to ascend) and *ārūḍha* (the ascended), with *karma* and *śama* (serenity) as the respective laws of their growth, are acceptable as a salient teaching. But that need not be taken as a plea for complete worklessness. The condition required for the *ārurukṣu* is

[59] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 46-56.
[60] *Ibid.*, VI. 3.
[61] *Ibid.*, VI. 4.
[62] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 46-55.
[63] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 2-4.

fulfilled if recourse is had to worklessness in an absolute sense only during the periods set apart for retreats, which may be of short or long duration. At other times, without unnecessarily extending the duties, an aspirant should do what is incumbent on him in a sacrificial spirit, even though he has passed the stage of the *ārurukṣu*, at which level dedicated work is the law of his progress. When work has lost all relevancy with regard to further advancement, what motive power can there be for an advanced spiritual aspirant to do work? Should he not give up work completely and devote himself to the practice of tranquillity alone, which is the law of his further development? In reply to this question, the *Gītā* strikes an entirely new note, by its supremely wise socialistic outlook couched in the concept of *lokasaṁgraha*—the conservation of the social order. It is offered as the justification of work in the case of all.[64] Men of realization are few and far between; the vast majority of men in this world are at a level of development in which work alone is their salvation. But if the few whom the world respects as the wisest of men set an example of worklessness, this majority too will follow it, considering it to be the true way of godly living,[65] and the consequences would be disastrous. For then idleness would pass for godliness, and pseudo-spirituality would grow, to the great detriment of social well-being.[66] As a great and luminous illustration of working for the conservation of the social order, the *Gītā* cites the example of the well-known royal sage Janaka,[67] who was engaged in fulfilling the duties of a king all through life and attained perfection. And above all, the example of God, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, is pointed out to impress on all aspirants the supreme importance of *lokasaṁgraha*, which is thereby raised from a social concept to a law of Divine Life itself, transcending all narrow notions of individual spiritual growth.[68]

[64] *Ibid.*, III. 20.
[65] *Ibid.*, III. 21.
[66] *Ibid.*, III. 26.
[67] *Ibid.*, III. 20.
[68] *Ibid.*, III. 22-26.

12

THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ: ITS SYNTHETIC CHARACTER

THE *Bhagavad-Gītā* is now a most, if not the most, popular Hindu scripture. It is regarded as one of the three main scriptures—the *prasthāna-trayas*, as they are called, the other two being the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma-Sūtras*. There is no other scripture which has been so frequently commented upon, for it has been a perennial source of spiritual inspiration, and rightly so, for in it we find different systems of philosophy, ethics, and religion, suited for different temperaments. This universality of the *Gītā* has, however, puzzled some scholars. In this variety of ideals they find contradictions, for instance, between monism and dualism, knowledge, action, and devotion, Sāṁkhya and Vedānta, and even between Personal God and Impersonal God. These themes, they think, are pieced together without much attempt at reconciliation. To explain these contradictions, they assume that there have been interpolations in the *Gītā*, which must have undergone revision like other parts of the *Mahābhārata*, of which it forms a part.[1] However plausible these theories may look, we think these critics have missed the master-key which alone would have helped them to open this 'jewel-casket' of Indian culture, viz. the spirit of synthesis.

The Indo-Aryans were never dominated by rigidity of thought at any time in any sphere of their national life. This freedom of thought helped them to evolve a synthetic outlook, a spirit of seeing unity behind variety. This synthetic outlook is predominantly noticeable in the field of religion. One of the Vedic seers taught to the Aryan tribes, 'That which exists is One, sages call it by various names'.[2] The discovery of this great truth has shaped the history of civilization in this country, and sages have reiterated it at different periods in our history, with the result that it has gone deep into the subconscious mind of the nation. The Hindus have therefore accepted different religions, systems of philosophy, and spiritual cultures as being suited to different temperaments, and as supplementing one another. In keeping with this spirit is the message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. He was a great harmonizer of ideals and institutions, and hence he did not reject any of the ideals extant at the time, but gave a proper place to each one of them; inasmuch as they were suited to the spiritual progress of particular people. If man is to progress spiritually,

[1] Winternitz, *HIL*, I. p. 435.

[2] *R.V.*, I. 164-46; also X. 115-5.

he must have religious ideals suited to him. Forcing him to follow ideals for which he is not fit will only result in harm and spiritual death. Therefore 'the wise man should not unsettle the faith of the ignorant'.[3] 'By whatsoever way men worship Me, even so do I accept them; (for) in all ways, O Pārtha, men walk in My path.'[4] Guided by this spirit, the *Gītā* has beautifully harmonized the various ideals prevalent at the time.

SYNTHESIS OF ACTION AND KNOWLEDGE

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* has not much esteem for the reward-seeking religion of Vedic sacrifices. It criticizes[5] the view of the Mīmāṁsakas, who think that ritualism is the whole of religion and is capable of leading man to *mukti* (liberation). According to the *Gītā*, sacrifices are merely a means to power and enjoyment and they cause rebirth; by means of them people no doubt get the result coveted, viz. heaven, where they enjoy the pleasures of the gods; but when their merit is exhausted they have to return to this mundane world. Thus, following the injunctions of the Vedas, seeking pleasure and enjoyment, they come and go. The votaries of the various gods go to the gods. It is only the devotees of the supreme Lord that go to Him and attain liberation. Even those who worship the gods as such, in reality worship the one supreme God; yet, as they are not conscious of the fact that these gods are but forms of the one God, who is the enjoyer and Lord of all sacrifices, they return to the mortal world.[6] But if they are conscious of the fact that they are worshipping the one God through the different deities, then these very sacrifices will lead them to liberation. Thus, in keeping with the Upaniṣadic teachings, the *Gītā* declares that it is knowledge alone that leads to liberation, and not mere ritualistic observance. Hence the exhortation to Arjuna to go beyond the *guṇas*, i.e. the world which is the sphere of rituals.[7]

The *Gītā*, however, realizes that for those who are full of desires and want enjoyment, these sacrifices are useful; for such people must have some enjoyment, and have their desires fulfilled to a certain extent, before they can tread the path of desirelessness, which is the goal of spiritual life. It is desire that covers knowledge and it has therefore to be destroyed by controlling its seats—the senses, the mind, and the intellect.[8] But this highest ideal cannot be followed by all. Ideals have to vary according to the capacity of the aspirants, so that they may be followed with faith; for that is a surer way to progress than aspiring after a higher ideal prematurely. Confusion of ideals is detrimental to individual

[3] *B.G.*, III. 26, 29.
[4] *Ibid.*, IV. 11
[5] *Ibid.*, II. 42-46.
[6] *Ibid.*, IX. 20-25.
[7] *Ibid.*, II. 45
[8] *Ibid.*, III. 30-41.

and social welfare. By performing works prescribed by the scriptures, though with desire to start with, one gradually progresses and finally attains the state of desirelessness. But works prohibited by the scriptures are never helpful, and so one should abide by the scriptural ordinances and not be prompted by inordinate desires prohibited by them.[9] Even in enjoyment there should be some discrimination. Otherwise it would bring us down to the level of the brute.

It looks like a paradox to say that sacrifices performed with desire will lead to desirelessness or absolute unselfishness. But then, in all sacrifices, though performed with desire, the performer offers something which he possesses to his chosen deity, who, thus propitiated, bestows on his devotee the desired fruit. Thus man learns to renounce and to be unselfish even through these selfish sacrifices, and gradually, as he progresses, he finds that he is in duty bound to offer to the gods the gifts that are bestowed on him by them, and that not to do so is sinful. Selfishness slowly recedes to the background, and duty becomes the guiding principle of these sacrifices. The *Gītā* stresses this idea of obligatoriness on the part of the ordinary man to perform sacrifices.[10]

Having stressed the duty aspect in sacrifices, the *Gītā* next amplifies the narrow and restricted meaning of the words 'duty' (*dharma*) and 'sacrifice' (*yajña*) that was current at the time. According to the *Gītā*, duty is not merely ritualistic acts prescribed by the Vedas, but it includes whatever we are obliged to do by birth and status in society.[11] In this sense, there can be no definition of duty which will be universally binding on all men and under all circumstances. It would necessarily vary with persons, and, with the change of circumstances, even for the same person. The only criterion to fix it is to see whether a particular act takes a person Godward or not. If it does, then it is his duty (*dharma*); otherwise it is a sin (*adharma*) for him. Duties are fixed for us by the inner law of our being, by the *saṁskāras*, or tendencies acquired by us in previous births, with which we are born; and working them out is the only way to proceed Godward. Consequently, there is no unchartered freedom in the choice of our duties, nor can the duty of one be the duty of another endowed differently. Doing duties thus determined by his nature, a man incurs no sin. Though they may be defective, he should not relinquish them; for, after all, any undertaking is attended with evil of some sort or other. Performance of one's duties is the only way to salvation.[12] Similarly, sacrifice does not mean merely ritualistic worship performed by offering material things in the

[9] *Ibid.*, XVI. 23-24.
[10] *Ibid.*, III. 10-16.
[11] *Ibid.*, II. 31, 33; XVIII. 41-44.
[12] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 45-48.

fire, but it includes all kinds of spiritual culture. Thus, acts of charity, giving up of desires, control of the senses and of the breath, muttering of mystic syllables and God's names, are all conceived as sacrifices.[13] In fact, according to the *Gītā*, sacrifice includes all acts whatsoever, done unselfishly; for the main idea in a sacrifice is the offering of something in the fire to the deity. So any act done without selfishness can be regarded as an offering, and therefore all such acts are sacrifice. With this changed meaning of the word 'sacrifice', the statement of the Mīmāṁsakas, 'This world is bound by action other than that done for a sacrifice', becomes more significant, for knowledge-sacrifice is superior to material sacrifices.[14] That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa repeats this statement[15] and asks Arjuna to perform action for the sake of sacrifice alone; for by performing work as sacrifice, one's entire action melts away.[16] Sacrifice being understood in this sense, the principle underlying Vedic ritualism is accepted; but a new meaning has been assigned to it, which makes it universally applicable.

Next Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes Arjuna one step higher and says that even this idea of duty is on a lower plane. For duty generally leaves ample scope for our desires and egoism. Arjuna might have fought the battle with the motive of gaining name, fame, and a kingdom. Outwardly everyone would have been satisfied that he had done his duty well; still it would not have helped him to progress spiritually and attain liberation, as his selfishness would still have been there—the attachment or desire for the result of the work—and it is this attachment that binds. So the only duty we have is to work in a non-attached way and not to get ourselves identified with the work.

How is non-attachment to be attained? The *Gītā* prescribes two ways to attain it: the way of knowledge for the meditative type of men and the way of selfless action for men of action.[17] Śrī Kṛṣṇa is aware of the fight between the adherents of knowledge and the adherents of action, viz. the Kāpila Sāṁkhyas and Vedāntins ranged against the Mīmāṁsakas. The latter insist that work should be performed, while the former declare that all work should be given up as evil.[18] The adherents of knowledge say that action belongs to the sphere of ignorance, and that all actions are overlaid with defects as fire by smoke; so it is futile to strive for liberation through action. The way to freedom lies in preventing the mind and the senses from going outward, which is their nature to do, and turning them inward on the Self.[19] But work distracts and externalizes our mind and senses; so all work should be renounced. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, however, prescribes a

[13] *Ibid.*, IV. 25-30; X. 25.
[14] *Ibid.*, IV. 33.
[15] *Ibid.*, III. 9.
[16] *Ibid.*, IV. 23.
[17] *Ibid.*, III. 3.
[18] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 3.
[19] *Ka. U.*, IV. 1.

middle path. He says that work should not be given up, but should be performed without attachment and desire for their fruit.[20] Renunciation and performance of action both lead to liberation, for they are not different, but one. Of the two, however, performance is superior, because it is easier and therefore suited for the vast majority, while renunciation of action is difficult to attain.[21] Only a few extraordinary souls can follow the way of knowledge. The goal is to attain *naiṣkarmya* (complete inaction), and it cannot be attained by merely giving up work externally and continuing to think of sense-objects; for such thinking also is action and capable of binding the soul; the reason being that attachment and desire, the main causes of bondage, still linger in the mind. Further it is not possible for the embodied being to give up work completely.[22] So that is not the way Śrī Kṛṣṇa prescribes for Arjuna. He asks him to perform his duties as a soldier, absorbed in *yoga*,[23] for that is the secret of work.[24] *Yoga* is equanimity, indifference to success and failure,[25] and one attains it when one's mind is free from desire for enjoyment and is firmly established in the Self.[26] Arjuna is therefore asked to fight with his mind established in the Self, and not to identify himself with his actions, for they are in reality done by the *guṇas* of Prakṛti (Nature's constituents), and it is only through delusion that a man identifies himself with them.[27] He is asked to transcend the *guṇas* and hold himself aloof as a witness of the doings of Prakṛti, and not to be attached to them.[28] When one works with this attitude of mind, there is no consciousness of being a 'doer', and one gets non-attached.[29] Work then loses its binding effect and becomes equal to no-work. If a man sees inaction in action,[30] then even in the midst of intense activity he experiences the eternal calmness of the soul, which is not ruffled, come what may. He is not affected by good and evil, happiness and misery, and in all conditions he remains the same, he becomes a *sthitaprajña*, a man of steady wisdom. The *Gītā* describes at some length[31] the nature of such a man who has perfected himself by the practice of selfless action. This is the Brāhmic state, or having one's being in Brahman; and, attaining it, one is no longer deluded, but gets merged in Brahman.[32] The *Gītā* thus asks us to perform our duties disinterestedly, combining the subjective attitude of the man of knowledge with outward action, that is to say, having an attitude of mind towards the performance of duties which is similar to that of a man of self-realization with respect to the normal functions of the body like seeing, hearing, smelling, eating, and sleeping (i.e. being free from the

[20] *B.G.*, XVIII. 5-6.
[21] *Ibid.*, V. 2-6.
[22] *Ibid.*, III. 4-6.
[23] *Ibid.*, II. 48.
[24] *Ibid.*, II. 50.
[25] *Ibid.*, II. 48.
[26] *Ibid.*, II. 53.
[27] *Ibid.*, III. 27.
[28] *Ibid.*, III. 28.
[29] *Ibid.*, XIII. 29.
[30] *Ibid.*, IV. 18.
[31] *Ibid.*, II. 55-71.
[32] *Ibid.*, II. 72.

idea of agency). Knowledge and action are harmonized thereby, and the statement[33] that knowledge (*sāṁkhya*) and action (*yoga*) are not different, but one, is justified by this explanation. The result attained is also identical, for that which is gained by knowledge, viz. everlasting peace,[34] is also attained by the man of selfless action.[35] Ritualism as the highest ideal is condemned, but as a stepping-stone to absolute unselfishness, it is worthy to be followed by persons who have desires.

ACTION AND DEVOTION

From the description of selfless action (Karma-yoga) given above, we may infer that it is not always necessary for a votary of it to have faith in God. But if he believes in a personal God, there is an easier method for him to attain non-attachment; by looking upon work as worship of the Lord, and by offering to Him its fruit, he makes his path smooth. Thus there is a much easier path suited to those who possess some faith and devotion. Worshipping Him through one's own duties,[36] by performing work for the Lord,[37] and by dedicating it to Him,[38] one attains liberation. From Him proceeds the activity of all beings.[39] He is the ultimate source of all power and as such He is the agent; we are but tools in His hand, mere machines. As He directs us, so we do. He is the inner Ruler directing all; failing to see this, we think that we are doing all actions and get ourselves bound. Through devotion man ultimately realizes this fact, surrenders himself to the Lord, works out His will and thus becomes absolutely unattached. There is no more compulsion to perform duties; nay, there is no idea even of duty, and the devotee does what is expected of him spontaneously, out of love for God. Arjuna realized all this with the vision of the Lord's cosmic form. He got rid of his delusion, regained memory of his true nature, and surrendered himself to the Lord, saying, 'I will carry out your behest'.[40] Here we have a beautiful synthesis of action and devotion, and that in an inseparable manner.

KAPILA SĀṀKHYA AND THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* gives great prominence to the Sāṁkhya system and accepts all that is valuable in it. The Sāṁkhya philosophers say: Prakṛti is the primordial non-differentiated material substance made up of three constituents—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.* The differentiated universe evolves out of the mingling of these constituents (*guṇas*) in various ways at the beginning of a cycle, and it is merged again in this undifferentiated Prakṛti

[33] *Ibid.*, V. 4.
[34] *Ibid.*, V. 29.
[35] *Ibid.*, V. 12.
[36] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 46.
[37] *Ibid.*, XII. 10.
[38] *Ibid.*, V. 10.
[39] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 46.
[40] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 73.

at the end of a cycle. This cyclic process goes on eternally. Prakṛti is unmanifest (*avyakta*), not perceptible to the senses, while all objects evolved out of it are manifest (*vyakta*) to the senses or the mind. Prakṛti is changefully eternal, while its products are mutable, in the sense that their perceptible form is destroyed in the evolutionary process. Beyond this Prakṛti, separate from it, and of a different nature, is the Puruṣa (soul). While Prakṛti is material and insentient, Puruṣa is sentient and immaterial. Unlike Prakṛti, he is changeless. Prakṛti produces the body and the senses and is responsible for all activity, but the Puruṣa is not a doer. He is indifferent, a mere witness of Nature's activities. Through ignorance, however, the Puruṣa gets identified with Nature and thus experiences pleasure and pain. This union of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti is responsible for this mundane existence. The bondage of the Puruṣa is apparent and not real, and when he realizes that he is separate from Prakṛti, he gets liberated. All this the *Gītā* accepts,[41] but it disagrees with the Sāṁkhya philosophers when they say that the Puruṣa and Prakṛti are self-existing independent entities, that there are an infinite number of souls, and that there is no God, the creator of the universe. The *Gītā* works out a further synthesis and says that this whole universe is one. It enunciates a third principle: Puruṣottama (the highest Being) or Īśvara (God),[42] Who is beyond both matter and spirit, and Who is the very basis of this universe. This one Being manifests Himself as this universe, both sentient and insentient. He is both the efficient and material cause of the universe. Thus Prakṛti and Puruṣa are dependent on God. Prakṛti with its twenty-four categories is lower nature[43] while the soul, which is a part of Him,[44] is His higher nature.[45] As the soul animates the individual body, so God animates the whole universe. There is nothing higher than God. All this visible universe is strung on Him like gems on a string.[46] Presiding over His Prakṛti, He projects the entire aggregate of beings.[47] Prakṛti is the mother of the universe, and He is the father.[48] Resorting to His Prakṛti, He takes birth, or manifests Himself.[49] Thus Prakṛti is not an independent entity, but belongs to Him. Though the *Gītā* accepts the multiplicity of individual souls, which are but parts of God, whether real or apparent, it declares that there is only one (supreme) Puruṣa, Who is not only the onlooker, the approver, and supporter of the activity of Prakṛti, but also the great Lord of Prakṛti.[50] Thus Prakṛti is not an independent entity, but subservient to Him, and it is He Who, through Prakṛti, is the cause of creation, and not

[41] *Ibid.*, VIII. 18-19; XIII. 19-23, 26, 28; XIV. 5, 19-20; XV. 16; XVIII. 40.
[42] *Ibid.*, XV. 17-18. [43] *Ibid.*, VII. 4-5. [44] *Ibid.*, XV. 7.
[45] *Ibid.*, VII. 5. [46] *Ibid.*, VII. 7. [47] *Ibid.*, IX. 8, 10.
[48] *Ibid.*, XIV. 4. [49] *Ibid.*, IV. 6. [50] *Ibid.*, XIII. 22.

Prakṛti independently. This supreme Being is the one Reality to be known, and knowing Him truly one enters into Him.[51] Liberation is therefore not merely discrimination between Prakṛti and Puruṣa, but also union with God. Thus a new synthesis between the dualism of the Sāṁkhya and the monism of the Upaniṣads is established.

GOD, PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

We find in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* various descriptions of the ultimate Reality. He is described as having no form or attribute, as having attributes but formless, and again as having both form and attributes—which shows that He is both impersonal and personal and yet beyond both, for we cannot limit Him and say He is this much, since the Infinite can never be an object of finite knowledge. In this impersonal aspect He is Brahman, the highest imperishable principle,[52] the unmanifest beyond the other unmanifest, viz. Prakṛti.[53] This unmanifest, imperishable Brahman, is the supreme goal, attaining which one does not return.[54] This Brahman is neither being nor non-being. Being beyond the range of the senses, It has no phenomenal existence. It is not non-being either, for It makes Itself felt through the functions of the various senses as the driving force behind them. It is bereft of all sense-organs, for otherwise It would be limited like ordinary beings; therefore the attribution of sense-organs[55] to It is only figurative and not real. It is unattached, yet sustains everything as Its substratum, being existence itself. It is without attributes, yet the energizer of all attributes. It is far and yet near, as our very soul. It is undivided in beings, yet remains as if divided. All these apparent contradictions[56] are resolved, if we remember that Brahman is both transcendent and immanent. Brahman has become this universe and yet transcends it. When the transcendent Brahman appears as this universe, It becomes subject, as it were, to certain limitations which do not really belong to It, but to the phenomenal world; hence this paradoxical description through affirmation and negation. It is the Light of lights and beyond darkness or ignorance.[57] The sun does not illuminate It, nor the moon, nor the fire.[58] This Brahman is the one Reality to be known in order to attain immortality.[59] To those whose ignorance is destroyed, their knowledge manifests It.[60] In this description of the Impersonal, we have an echo of the Upaniṣads.

Though the *Gītā* accepts this impersonal aspect of the Godhead, yet it

[51] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 55.
[52] *Ibid.*, VIII. 3.
[53] *Ibid.*, VIII. 18, 20.
[54] *Ibid.*, VIII. 21.
[55] *Ibid.*, XIII. 13.
[56] *Ibid.*, XIII. 12-16.
[57] *Ibid.*, XIII. 17.
[58] *Ibid.*, XV. 6.
[59] *Ibid.*, XIII. 12.
[60] *Ibid.*, V. 16.

is predominantly theistic in its teachings. It is a peculiarity of the *Gītā* that it always lays stress on the ideal which is suited to the vast majority of mankind, as against any other, however perfect, which may be suited only for the exceptional few. So in the *Gītā* the personal God is given more prominence than the impersonal. 'Personal' does not mean merely 'having form', it means also the formless aspect with attributes, the Īśvara, as He is called in the *Gītā*. The term 'personality' refers to a self-conscious being capable of knowing, feeling, willing, loving, and satisfying man's longing for a personal relationship. All human qualities are attributed to the Divine Personality, but they are free from all human limitations. Thus, He not only knows, but He is omniscient. The Impersonal is beyond thought; so when the mind tries to conceive It, it naturally superimposes some of its own limitations on It, and we have the personal God, the Īśvara. That is the highest reading of the Impersonal by the finite mind of man. So long as we are limited beings, we have this triple entry—soul, nature, and God. It is the Impersonal that appears as all these. But when we attain the superconscious state, where the 'I' ceases to exist, all these three entities vanish, and God is no longer personal. He is experienced as pure Consciousness. Thus, these two—the impersonal and the personal, the absolute and the relative—are but two aspects of the same Godhead. The absolute implies the relative, and *vice versa*. They are not two separate entities, even as fire and its burning capacity are not different, and we cannot think of the one without the other. When we think of God as inactive He is impersonal, and when He is active He is called Īśvara, the personal God, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, the father. mother, friend, Lord, supporter, abode, refuge, and goal.[61] This universe is pervaded by Him in His unmanifest form.[62] He exists supporting the whole universe with a portion of Himself.[63] Thus He is both immanent and transcendent. He is seated in the heart of all beings, controlling them from within.[64] There is nothing higher than He.[65] Just as He supports this whole universe as its cause, even so He supports the differentiated things as their very essence. He is thus the moisture in water, lustre in the sun and the moon, and heat in the fire, sound in ether, odour in earth, etc. All beings are in Him, but He is not in them; nor are the beings really in Him. That is His divine mystery.[66] This mystery of *māyā* veils Him from ordinary mortals, but those who surrender themselves to Him surmount this *māyā*. Those who take refuge in Him and strive for liberation know that supreme Brahman, the Impersonal,

[61] *Ibid.*, IX. 17-18. [62] *Ibid.*, IX. 4. [63] *Ibid.*, X. 42.
[64] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 61. [65] *Ibid.*, VII. 7. [66] *Ibid.*, IX. 4-5.

through the grace of the Lord.[67] Again, this universe of sentient and insentient beings is the manifest form of the formless Īśvara, for He has become all this. It is His universal form which was shown to Arjuna, and which only the fortunate few have been able to see through undivided devotion.[68] This universe being a manifest form of the Lord, He is immanent in all things, and as such they are symbols of God. In certain things, however, the manifestation of His power, is greater, which makes them far superior to other objects of that class. Such extraordinary things are mentioned in chapter ten as *pratīkas* or symbols for meditating on God. From such statements we easily understand that this immanence can be manifest in an extraordinary degree in a human form, which gives us an Incarnation of God. There is no difference between God as unmanifest and God as manifest in such a human form. He takes such human forms and incarnates Himself in this world at critical periods in its history, to destroy the wicked and establish righteousness.[69] It is very difficult to recognize God when He incarnates Himself in human form, for He behaves so like ordinary mortals that people are deluded into thinking that He is just one of them. 'The ignorant deride Me Who have taken a human form, not knowing My higher nature as the great Lord of beings.'[70] It is only a few great souls that recognize God when He appears in human form, but the vast majority take Him for an ordinary mortal born subject to his own past *karma*.[71] He who truly knows the divine birth and work of an Incarnation attains liberation after death.[72]

KNOWLEDGE AND DEVOTION

In many places in the *Gītā* devotion to both the Impersonal and the Personal aspects of God has been prescribed for attaining liberation. In stanzas 2-8 of chapter three, corresponding to these two aspects, two paths, namely, the way of knowledge and the way of devotion, are clearly stated; but a higher place is given to devotion, for the usual reason that it is the easier of the two and, therefore, suited to the generality of mankind, while the path of knowledge is difficult and suited only to a very few of exceptional spiritual calibre. In this path of knowledge the aspirant has to realize that the world is illusory and Brahman alone is real. He has to get a firm conviction through reasoning that Brahman is not this universe, nor the mind, nor the intellect, nor the senses, neither happiness nor misery, and so on, till by this process he finally comes to the core of things and realizes the Absolute. Merely an intellectual grasp of the illusory

[67] *Ibid.*, VII. 14, 25, 29; X. 10-11.
[68] *Ibid.*, XI. 54.
[69] *Ibid.*, IV. 6-8.
[70] *Ibid.*, IX. 11.
[71] *Ibid.*, VII. 24-25.
[72] *Ibid.*, IV. 9.

nature of the world will not help him; He has to be established in this knowledge even in the midst of the worst possible calamities. For ordinary mortals, to whom this world of the senses is real, it is very difficult indeed to be established in this knowledge. Hence the Lord dissuades Arjuna from this path and prescribes for him the easier path of devotion to His personal aspect. In this path a man has not to give up his passions, feelings, etc., but has to switch them on to God. Instead of having worldly things for their objects, they are directed solely to God. He merely disconnects them from the worldly objects and connects them with God, and if this is done successfully, he attains liberation. The chief motive in both the ideals is to get rid of this little 'I' by merging it either in the infinite 'I', the Self, or in the infinite 'Thou', that is, God. The net result is the same—attainment of freedom. 'One worships saying, "I am Thyself", while another saying, "I am Thine"; though there is a slight difference between the two, the ultimate result is the same.'[73] The difference is only in language, but the content of the spiritual practices is the same, namely, the elimination of 'I' and 'mine', which are bondages of the soul. The devotee gets rid of them by constant remembrance of and service to God, and in the highest state of devotion he forgets himself entirely and sees his Beloved everywhere and in everything, even as the man of knowledge comes to the final conclusion, 'All this indeed is Vāsudeva (the Lord)'.[74] Again, 'By devotion he knows Me truly, how much and what I am';[75] that is, he realizes the Lord's impersonal aspect as pure Consciousness. Further, a devotee, through unswerving devotion to the Lord, transcends the *guṇas* and becomes fit for merging in Brahman.[76] In like manner, unswerving devotion is prescribed as a means to knowledge;[77] and conversely, when a man realizes Brahman, the impersonal aspect of God, he gets devotion to His personal aspect also.[78] Thus knowledge and devotion get merged in each other.

SYNTHESIS OF THE FOUR YOGAS

Commentators on the *Gītā* often give prominence to one of these four paths taught in the book, viz. action, knowledge, devotion, and meditation, and relegate the others to a secondary position, as preparatory disciplines to the one which, they think, is the true way to God-realization. Such a thing, however, is not justified by the *Gītā* itself. It goes against the very spirit of the *Gītā*, its synthetic outlook. According to it, each of these

[73] *Tavāsmīti bhajaty ekaḥ tvam evāsmīti cāparaḥ*
Iti kiñcid viśeṣepi pariṇāmaḥ samo dvayoḥ—Narahari, *Bodhasāra*, 32. 23.
[74] *B.G.*, VII. 19. [75] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 55. [76] *Ibid.*, XIV. 26.
[77] *Ibid.*, XIII. 10. [78] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 54.

paths is equally efficacious and capable of leading the soul to freedom. 'Some see the Self in the body by the mind through meditation, others by the path of knowledge, and some others by the path of selfless action.'[79] That this interpretation is correct, is further borne out by the descriptions given in the *Gītā* of men who have attained perfection in each of these paths.[80] These texts show that the various aspirants reach the same state, for similar qualities are manifest in their character. In fact, the *Gītā* clearly states that they all reach the Brāhmic state or become one with Brahman—*Brahmabhūta*.[81]

The *Gītā*, though it recognizes the efficacy of each of these paths to lead the soul to freedom, yet recommends an harmonious combination of all four paths. The predominant one gives the name to that particular path, while the other three are combined with it as feeders to strengthen the main spiritual current. Thus, we find the path of selfless action combined in the first place with knowledge; for the aspirant has to perform work externally having the subjective attitude of the Sāṁkhya internally. He is to work, established in *yoga*, with an even mind, and this equanimity is not possible till one's mind is free from the distractions of the senses and desires. The senses have to be controlled, if one is to practise selfless action efficiently, and this can be attained not by merely abstaining from sense-objects, but by meditation on the Lord.[82] Thus with action are combined knowledge, meditation, and devotion. Similarly, devotion, in its paths, is combined with the other three. The aspirant is to have a knowledge of the nature of Iśvara and His glories, for devotion is possible only after that. Then the aspirant is asked to offer all his actions to the Lord,[83] and also to worship Him through the performance of his duties. His devotion has also to be constant and unswerving; it must be a continuous remembrance of the Lord, which is meditation. So with devotion are combined knowledge, action, and meditation. Again, in the path of knowledge, discrimination between the Self and the not-Self is the main aim. One has to discriminate and give up the idea that matter is real. The Self alone is real, and all else is illusory. Constantly remembering our true nature is the way to separate the Self from the not-Self. Work also has to be performed and should not be given up, but it should be done without desire for results; for work is purifying and helpful to us to rise from *tamas* to *rajas* and thence to *sattva*, and finally to transcend the

[79] *Ibid.*, XIII. 24.
[80] For action see *Ibid.*, II. 55-72; for meditation, VI. 7-10, 27-32; for devotion, XII. 13-20; for knowledge, XIII. 7-12, XIV. 23-25, and XVIII. 50-53.
[81] *Ibid.*, II. 72, VI. 27, XIV. 26, and XVIII. 53-54.
[82] *Ibid.*, II. 61.
[83] *Ibid.*, IX. 27.

guṇas and become *guṇātīta,* when full knowledge dawns. Unswerving devotion to the Lord is a means to this attainment of knowledge, and has therefore to be adopted. Thus with knowledge are combined meditation, action, and devotion, though knowledge is the main note in this symphony. So the *Gītā* views spiritual life as an organic whole, and recommends an harmonious blending of the four *yogas,* which would result in an all-round development of the human personality.

SOCIAL SYNTHESIS

One of the great tasks that Śrī Kṛṣṇa set himself to was to weld the different races and civilizations in India in his time into an integral society of an all-India character, so that peace and harmony could reign in the land. To bring about this social synthesis, he first held out to them a common ideal. He taught that union with God was the supreme end of life, and that this worldly life was all vanity. 'Having attained this transient joyless world (i.e. human birth), worship Me'[64]—that was his behest to Arjuna and through him to all the warring nations of the time. He based the whole social structure on this solid foundation, viz. that the supreme reality and the only thing of value was God. All life, according to him, had a meaning in so far as it culminated in a union with God. This became the dominant note of the whole social fabric round which Indian society was sought to be organized. The different racial and ethnic groups in the country, Aryan and non-Aryan, with their different traits, were stamped with this fundamental principle of Aryan life; and this helped to integrate them into one society with a common ideal, which became the bond of unity among them. As a corollary to this main principle, he also preached the harmony of religious ideals, showing thereby that various religious ideals were equally efficacious to lead man to the ultimate goal. In his delineation of the four *yogas,* he enunciated the fundamentals of spiritual life, and thereby made it possible for the Aryan faith to assimilate the alien cultures and religions within its fold. This also helped to bring about a unity amidst diversity, all these ideals being synthesized as parts or facets of an integral whole. Again, God according to the *Gītā,* as we have already seen, is both transcendent and immanent. So in striving to attain union with God, the aspirant is filled with love for His immanent aspect also, and his love therefore embraces the whole humanity. He is ever engaged in the good of all creatures,[65] and he judges of pleasure and pain of all creatures by the same standard as he applies to himself.[66] The same God exists equally in all beings, and the aspirant

[64] *Ibid.*, IX. 33. [65] *Ibid.*, V. 25; XII. 4. [66] *Ibid.*, VI. 32.

realizing this truth does not injure anybody in any way and thus goes to the Supreme.[27] He breaks through the superficial differences between man and man—racial or other—and reaches his inner essence which is God. The vision was thus directed towards the unity at the back of the inevitable differences between man and man, and in that unity all these differences were eliminated.

A great barrier, however, in the way of attaining this social synthesis was the hereditary caste system prevalent at the time among the Aryans, which kept non-Aryan races outside Aryan society. Śrī Kṛṣṇa introduced social liberalism within the Aryan society by changing the basis of this division of society, and made it possible to assimilate non-Aryans to the Aryan social fold. He did not reject the fourfold division of society, but accepted it as God-ordained,[28] for the destruction of caste would have led to the ruin of the social organization. Any society that is strong and progressive, necessarily welcomes variety into its structure; for when variations cease to be produced, death results. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepted the fourfold division of society, based it on the qualities of individuals and on their fitness to live a particular mode of life suitable to serve society in a particular way. The division was functional, and each individual was expected to do that kind of service to society for which he was best equipped according to his *guṇa* and *karma*, or his moral, spiritual, and intellectual endowments as determined by his previous births and actions.[29] It was a question of service, and not that of rights or privileges, which are the bane of all societies. This put the right man in the right place, and there was no waste of energy nor want of efficiency, which would otherwise have resulted from an indiscriminate division of labour. This fourfold division of labour removed competition between individuals in society. The performance of one's duties, if done as worship of the Lord, opened the gates of liberation, which was the goal of life according to the *Gītā*.[30] Spiritual progress depended not on the nature of the work performed, but on the attitude of the mind, and the efficiency with which it was performed. The way to freedom was open to all irrespective of the caste to which they belonged, and so far as the attainment of their goal in life was concerned, all were equal and had equal opportunities. The ritualistic Vedic religion was the monopoly of the two higher castes, the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas; the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, and even the Brāhmaṇa women, had no access to it, since they lacked the necessary classical study for taking part in it. The simple religion of faith and devotion to the Lord threw

[27] *Ibid.*, XII. 27-28.
[28] *Ibid.*, IV. 13; VIII. 41.
[29] *Ibid.*, IV. 13.
[30] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 46.

open the gates of liberation to every one, and put all, irrespective of their caste, sex, and learning, on an equal footing.

Incarnations come not to destroy, but to fulfil, and this statement is particularly true of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He did not break off from accepted traditions, though he completely changed their significance and bearing. He interpreted old ideals in a new light to make them suitable to the conditions of life in society and to give it a further push towards progress and perfection. Conflicts between ideals were resolved in a new synthesis which made life smooth both for the individual and society as a whole. This is the fundamental note in the message of the *Gītā*—the spirit of harmony, the finding of unity in diversity; and from this point of view all apparent contradictions in it are resolved.

13

THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ: ITS EARLY COMMENTARIES

THE *Bhagavad-Gītā* represents a unique stage in the development of Indian culture. It has a series of commentaries from the great creators of Indian thought and Indian life like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya and Śrī Rāmānujācārya. It stands even today as a great book of inspiration. The great commentators like Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja contribute their own thoughts in expounding the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* and also draw the confirmation of their thoughts from it. In the colophon at the end of every chapter of the *Gītā,* the text is called an Upaniṣad. From the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya it is clear that he believed that the *Gītā* had the same prestige and dignity as the Upaniṣads. It not only makes an intellectual clarification of the problems of life, but also unearths life's fundamental ground so that light may be thrown upon the complex formation of life. This all-embracing inspiration finds for it a meaning and a value for all the basic philosophic conceptions and the intuitions which they carry with them. The *Gītā* as a spiritual scripture has found out the values of the different modes of approach to Truth-realization prevalent then in India, and it also lays down the method of approach which can unfailingly place Truth before the seeker. It is therefore essentially a book of spiritual approach and realization. I appreciate very much an observation of the poet George Russell on the *Gītā*; he has written to me in a letter that 'it is a highly spiritual book on which thousands of commentaries have been written, but its teachings have not yet been realized'. Its teachings are based on the actual flowering of life; it requires beyond intellectual analysis and understanding an occult and mystical opening. The classical commentators are Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmānujācārya, and others who came after them, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Veṅkaṭanātha, and Śrīdhara Svāmin.

THE BHĀṢYA OF ŚAṄKARĀCĀRYA

We shall take up Śaṅkarācārya's *bhāṣya* (commentary) first. He does not forsake even in his study of the *Gītā* his central standpoint, the identification of Jīva and Brahman and the illusoriness of the world. He evaluates the different disciplines of spiritual life, *karma, yoga,* and *bhakti,* laid down for the pursuit of Truth. Each of these disciplines has a value of its own, inasmuch as it releases us from bondage at different planes of existence. In many chapters Śaṅkara has given his reflections on Karma-yoga. He sees the importance of Karma-yoga and throws great light on

the place of *karma* in our life, and traces out its connection with the higher phases of expression in spiritual life. According to him, the *Gītā* takes note of many stages, or expressions, of *karma*: (1) as a method of discipline in the social order and the source of enjoyment in life after death, (2) as a principle of duty based on the categorical imperative, (3) as a method of inward spiritual discipline, and (4) as the waking up of the cosmic will in us and its application to the service of the world. But in his general philosophical outlook he has not laid any emphasis on *karma*. He has denounced it as not a proper method of realization of the Truth. But while commenting on the *Gītā*, which presents the dynamic side of life, he has developed it in all its phases, presented it as one with the dynamic being, and pointed out its value as a method of spiritual expression, spiritual uplift, and effective spiritual inspiration, on the earth plane. The first three disciplines mentioned above represent *karma* in the former sense, and the last one in the latter sense. In the dynamic side of our life, *karma* exhibits itself as a force of social adjustment and as a method of spiritual awakening—the upward urge in which life exhibits itself as a constant inward force for a higher illumination and awakening. *Karma* is not an all too earthy concern. It has the constant urge of identifying itself with the cosmic will through which the new epochs of life get their formation and inspiration. The relation between spiritual aspiration and the movement of the cosmic will is very intimate. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Master, enjoins upon Arjuna to be the instrument of his activities in the world order, he was really invoking in him the cosmic will, which is above all human ethical considerations. Here the dynamic side gets the fullest expression and is above all the ordinary and normal expressions of the will. The normal expressions are eloquent in the Vedas as supplying the root of satisfaction in the performance of sacrifices, and in the upbuilding of the social order on the conservation of values. But it cannot go above them, call in the superior force that stands above all normatives, and impresses the movement of the cosmic will in life through all creative formations. This is really *karma* of the superman above the normal standard of values. It all depends upon the higher opening in our being which removes all distinction between the human will and the Divine will. Emphasizing this at the end of His message, after reviewing all the forms of discipline, Śrī Kṛṣṇa inculcates the complete resignation of the inner being to achieve the dynamic identification of our being with the Divine. This is supposed to be the highest discipline; but Śaṅkara, true to his philosophical conception, has interpreted this discipline to be abjuring all dynamical aspirations and finally to fix in the Transcendence.

Śaṅkara has emphasized the 'duty for duty's sake' conception, because

it releases man from all vital solicitations and imports into spiritual life the effective movement of will without any earthly attraction and satisfaction. The 'duty for duty's sake' conception has this significance that it moves our active being with a new meaning and new light. This is requisite for the spiritual formation of the will. But later, the higher stage in will-expression emerges as dedication of being, in complete surrender.

With this dynamic formation another phase of spiritual life is brought out—the nucleus of life of spirit in devotion. In the *Gītā* this devotion has a great significance, inasmuch as it opens a new phase in the dynamic life and helps to realize God as lover and sustainer of all devotees. Devotion is really complete withdrawing of being and merging it in the manifested Divine. The immediate fruit of this is the cosmic manifestation of the Divine through all Nature's forces and in our heart of hearts as master, sustainer, ultimate rest, and the great friend. This phase in spiritual life is a great necessity; it frees our minds from the ordinary course of life and presents the great life force pervading through the whole cosmos and our life. The Divine is all-pervading and all-controlling, and manifests Its greatness and powers through all the forces in Nature; and to spiritual insight Nature's forces are not purely natural, they have supernatural being and guidance. The divine revelation through Nature has therefore a deep meaning, as the whole course of event in Nature gets a deeper meaning as reflecting the Divine will. Similarly, in man this insight exhibits the movement of our being completely in spirit, also as an exhibition of the immanent Divinity functioning in human society. In both the places, the Divine is revealed as power, but in devotion along with power a friendship and kinship are also exhibited. The *Gītā* is eloquent about it and a complete surrender in this spirit of friendship is enjoined upon us as helping in all circumstances, especially in spiritual growth; and therefore the *Gītā* has given explicit direction to be of the same mind with the Divine, to be always devout and devoutly moving in worship and similar activities.[1] This privilege is attainable only when the seeker is not envious of anybody, when he has been kind to everything, and when he dedicates himself in spirit, in mind, and intelligence, to the Divine. He then attains a fruition so that he is not disturbed by anybody nor disturbs anybody. He maintains an equilibrium in being and equanimity in mind. Devotion transcends the realm of *vibhūti* and reveals the intimate relationship between the Divine and the human, and establishes man's higher possibilities in the Divine order. This spirit of devotion helps the realization of Hiraṇyagarbha as the first evolute in the cosmic order. The Sāṁkhya and the Pātañjala emphasize meditation on Hiraṇyagarbha and Īśvara as helping the final

[1] *B.G.*, IX. 34.

realization. The *Gītā* has not overlooked it, because the path of meditation is an analytical penetration of the Transcendental. It is a method of getting into the Reality by removing the layers of being, the formations of Prakṛti. It requires perfect equipoise, balance of being, and complete detachment ; for the least vibration will break equanimity. The more the initiate rises up towards illumination, the more he will feel that the subtlest layer of being is filled with the revelation of *buddhi* as the cosmic principle. This is the finest emergence, and meditation on it has the beneficial effect of giving us acquaintance with the potential Divine.

The *Gītā*, according to Śaṅkara, has place for three fundamental categories of existence as *kṣara*, *akṣara*, and Puruṣottama. *Kṣara* is the order of evolutes—the changing principles in the universe. *Akṣara* is non-relational transcendental reality behind them, and Puruṣottama is the intermediate principle between *kṣara* and *akṣara*, which controls everything in the world and is the source of perpetual knowledge and bliss. In the course of evolution all the finite creatures may contact Puruṣottama and be endowed with all His powers and virtues and proceed further. They may transcend these virtues, which may have a cosmic character and influence, but which cannot give them ultimate satisfaction associated with removal of all concentration and limitation in the *akṣara* Brahman. Puruṣottama is a stage which is indeed attractive, inasmuch as it removes the qualities evolved in the Prakṛti and gives a kind of freedom ; but the personal life still lingers in a beatific form and with all bliss associated with it. But this, according to Śaṅkara, is not the final stage of evolution, which comes with the complete enthronement in transcendence, in detachment from the dynamic principles, however fine and glorious. Śaṅkara thinks that this is the highest promise of the life of knowledge, and in his interpretation of complete self-surrender, he has thought of the Absolute as the highest pitch of realization, for it removes the basis of personal knowledge and consciousness completely. In the *Gītā* Śaṅkara never loses sight of this metaphysical position, but only indicates with splendid clearness how life seeking spiritual light passes through all the ways and paths comes to the final illumination, and how in its spontaneous and natural inspiration it passes through all the stages in the growth of consciousness and completely removes all limitations in the transcendental apex of being. This is the fundamental position of Śaṅkara as a commentator of the *Gītā*.

THE BHĀṢYA OF RĀMĀNUJA

Rāmānuja as a theist adheres to the principle of atomicity of being, and its evolution through the finer stages of Prakṛti till it reaches the

supernal delight in Īśvara. Rāmānuja believes in the dynamism of being and its aspiration through knowledge, power, and love. This finer or transcendental dynamism is located in Mahālakṣmī, the divine consort of Mahāviṣṇu, the ultimate Reality. Mahālakṣmī is associated with the creative order and with the individual soul. All aspiring souls should relate themselves to Mahālakṣmī as a source of inspiration and as the end of consummation of their evolution and spiritual fruition. *Karma* therefore implies our effort to be dynamically united with Mahālakṣmī in her creative inspiration and creative fulfilment. It is not a blind urge, but is inspiration of Mahālakṣmī through our spirit. Looked at from this point of view, *karma* is spiritually formative, because it frees the soul from the mechanical bondage and reveals the joy of spiritual creation in the order of actuality. It introduces a new vision of the world-order as actuality, being formed and sustained in the movement of Spirit.

Since *karma* is associated with the movement of Nature, it cannot exhibit the finer and higher dynamism of being, working, and expressing itself in the supernatural order—the realm of the Spirit. The finer aspect of this dynamic movement is revealed with higher formations in knowledge and devotion. Knowledge is perpetual functioning in Spirit, for ultimately man is essentially spiritual and the order presented before it in superior spiritual plane is the divine order in rhythm, in bliss. There can be no cessation to this, and the secret to get access there is still to disclose our being, as essentially spiritual and integral part of the Divine. When this is revealed, true spiritual life emerges as moving in the Divine in thought, feeling, and activity. The spiritual life affords the immanental beauties and powers active in the creative order, and also the transcendental dignity beyond the creative order. These are the impressions of the divine majesty and holiness and are ever the source of attractions towards the Infinite; the earnest seeker feels the dignity of Divine life in its freshness through Nature, specially through power and majesty. This is evident in chapter eleven of the *Gītā*. Divine majesty and dignity, according to Rāmānuja, are inherent in the Divine, for the dynamic concept fits the powers in the Divine order naturally and spontaneously. And according to him, the essence of spirituality is fundamentally dynamic, for the basic reality has in it a dynamic urge to express itself in creation and beyond creation. The spiritual felicities are in the transcendent order, and they express themselves with the unfolding of the spirit. The creative order opens with, and in, Spirit, but the transcendent order is full of spiritual felicities and blissfulness and does not contain the least conflict and confusion, because it is essentially Divine and has no touch with the lower creative order which is full of strain and tension. Śaṅkara does not put his faith in the dynamic

spiritual expression, because according to him dynamism is not spiritual, although it can have glorious expression in a higher plane where the crude dynamism cannot function. This is the order of Iśvara, and all glories that were manifested therein are after all *māyika*. This is the difference between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. This may enkindle fine spirituality, but the highest is reached in Transcendence. Śaṅkara therefore does not hold a spontaneous expression in love and beauty; he does not lay much stress on them; for according to him all dynamic expression does not fit in ultimate Reality and stands lower in value; even the superior expressions in the higher order of existence fall short of the transcendental height and dignity. For this the best possible course is to suspend our normal activities in complete surrender.

True surrender is the automatic suspension of normal activities and the opening out of the Divine channel through which flows down the Divine mercy and power. It is in fact the establishing of the unfailing connection between the human and the Divine. It is the greatest instrument of evoking the Divine power and Divine being in the inmost depths of our existence, and it shapes out the Divine form and puts a Divine touch on all our movements. Philosophically speaking, it is entering into the archetypal order and drawing the Divine creative power. When this height of being is touched, man is no longer the creator, and he is not guided by his intelligence and power. The Divine power holds him up and reveals itself through all his activities. Rāmānuja thinks that this is the best route of attracting the Divine influence in us and permeating our whole being with it; the man is reborn and his total being is transformed by it. The senses, the intelligence, the psychic being, all are influenced by this higher power, and supramental intelligence and power become active in us.

In spiritual discipline, Rāmānuja has put all the emphasis on surrender, as it is the most inward of all spiritual disciplines and as it establishes a direct contact immediately. In spiritual life the most difficult of all ventures is to get out of touch with the normal and natural functioning of the dynamic process and to get hold of its Divine nature. This unfolding is not normally possible and to this end varied courses are followed. The normal course may be effective, but it cannot help the Divine flowering of being and show its sublimity and beauty. *Śaraṇāgati* (complete resignation to God) has the greatest indrawn urge and makes its transformation complete and our being has a rhythmic expression and movement. It becomes a piece of poetry harmonic in expression, beautiful in its cadence, sweet and attractive in its activities. In surrender we get the finest in spiritual love, as it gets its poise in the Divine and expression through the

Divine. Life is held up here in the Divine and moves in the Divine and enjoys in the Divine; the transformation becomes complete. The power that it throws is also Divine and it moves either in the individual or in society in the most musical tune and gives an idea of what actually Divine life is. Even when the bitterness becomes evident it transforms the distracted being and establishes peace in it. The supernal delight, beauty, and power, are enthroned in the heart of the world through this. And therefore its importance has so greatly been upheld by Rāmānuja.

To Rāmānuja surrender is the essence of spiritual life and forms the basic spiritual discipline, for all other methods are involved in it. Surrender gives the highest aspiration to Divine union and this is *yoga*. It involves a kind of test which is the nucleus of devotion. And with it comes knowledge in which the presence and the power of the Divinity are impressed on us. With it descends a power from God gradually begetting our realization according to our aspiration. It invites the dynamic Divine into our being and shapes our being in a way that can eventually make it a Divine instrument.

MADHUSŪDANA SARASVATĪ

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī was a great monist and did his best to logically establish monism in his famous *Advaitasiddhi*; but in the commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* he has recognized the values of different channels of life's expression, such as *yoga,* and the analytical penetration of Sāṁkhya. Ultimately he thinks that the best course in the life of the Spirit is the cultivation of devotion, and he especially prefers Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the best emblem of the Divine, giving solace in troubles and being the source of all blessedness for the soul. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was to him his heart's rest, life's joy. Madhusūdana gives the highest place to devotion as the effective method of God-realization. In a sentence he has expressed that those who can worship the inscrutable Unmanifested, may well do so; but for him there is nothing greater than the thought of surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and nothing sweeter than the love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Madhusūdana had the mystic vision and he did not confine himself to the analytical and the logical method to open the sheaths of being. He probed deeper and entered into indrawn urge which reveals itself with *śaraṇāgati* which concentrates itself on the Divine. It is a method associated with the total being, psychic as well as devotional, and invites an urge from above which clarifies our being and reveals its Divine nature. When this nature is revealed it passes through the different strata of our being till it catches the most potent urge upholding us in the creative order against many destructive forces and getting hold of the fine central

current of being which gets through the finer layers of being, ultimately reaching the goal—the fellowship of the Divine. This offers a great possibility of guiding our life according to Divine direction and Divine purpose. Nothing earthly remains in the adept, he becomes centred in the Divine. But the highest beatitude in liberation had not been lost sight of by Madhusūdana, who expressly wrote that concentrating on the Divine, the adept gets the superior satisfaction and dignity associated with the Divine, and finally passes into the Transcendental and becomes liberated.[3]

THE BHAṢYA OF SRIDHARA ŚVĀMIN

Śrīdhara Svāmin was a commentator of the *Gītā*. He recognized that the *akṣara* is behind the world of creative evolutes and is ever in the state of unconditioned being; but beyond the conditioned and unconditioned being he accepted the one who is dynamically more potent and is known as Puruṣottama, who regulates the world order, and who permeates everything and is recognized as the most essential being of everything, controller of everything, and master of everything. Śrīdhara regards this principle of Puruṣottama as more important, as it has the profound poise of the *akṣara* as well as the superior dynamism beyond the creative dynamism of Nature. He therefore combines in it the transcendence as well as the superior beatitude of bliss and power. Śrīdhara was also anxious to concentrate on the Divine by complete surrender. He was in favour of giving up all duties going with the stations of life and believed sincerely that by forsaking these duties no sin would be incurred; for the Lord gives the promise of liberation from all sins to those that are concentrated in Him.

The *Gītā* is a book of books. It shows how the realization of Reality demands that all the forces of being are to be set in the same channel. In the method of achievement, or *sādhanā*, it does not leave anything outside. It assesses the premium of every effort, every method, and shows how ultimately they lead to realization by explaining the different relations of the soul. It recognizes all methods, analytical and devotional, and finally, the fulfilment of the Divine dynamism through devotion. Because devotion brings the dynamic side of our being to the forefront, and through spiritualization it is transformed into a Divine current, which reveals the dynamic fulfilment (associated with devotion); and transcendental wisdom, remaining hidden in the depth of the dynamic being, is ushered in. The Divine dynamism disassociates our being from Prakṛti (thus fulfilling the promises of the Sāṁkhya and the Pātañjala) and associates it with the dynamic Divine, revealing the possibilities of still higher blossoming. This close

[3] Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on *B.G.*, XV. 18: *Nārāyaṇasya mahimānam-anantapāram.*

fellowship with the dynamic Divine yields a great force which reveals the truth of identity—the force of expansiveness which removes the least distance between the seeker and the sought, so that occasionally the seeker has the feeling of identity with the Divine and finally realizes the transcendental dignity of being and not the least difference is left. This is the final spiritual fulfilment; and the *Gītā* indicates it by the paths of *yoga*; if one rightly follows them, the final identity is sure to ensue. The *Gītā* thus shows how in the path of devotion all the spiritual possibilities meet, and how the different paths holding different promises in the onward journey ultimately come to the depth of stillness—a unique spiritual realization which is the inevitable consequence of our spiritual yearning.

14

IMITATIONS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND LATER GĪTĀ LITERATURE

EXTENT AND NATURE

BESIDES the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which is generally known as 'the *Gītā*', scholars have noticed many other tracts of varying lengths composed in verse form to which the title 'Gītā' is given. Sixteen of them are from (a) the *Mahābhārata*,[1] twenty from (b) the Purāṇas and similar treatises, and four (c) found as independent works untraced to any other known epic or Purāṇa. Under the group marked (a) are to be found: *Utathya-Gītā*,[2] *Vāmadeva-Gītā*,[3] *Ṛṣabha-Gītā*,[4] *Ṣaḍaja-Gītā*,[5] *Sampāka-Gītā*,[6] *Maṅki-Gītā*,[7] *Bodhya-Gītā*,[8] *Vicakhnu-Gītā*,[9] *Hārīta-Gītā*,[10] *Vṛtra-Gītā*,[11] *Parāśara-Gītā*,[12] *Haṁsa-Gītā*,[13] *Brahma-Gītā*,[14] *Anu-Gītā*,[15] and *Brāhmaṇa-Gītā*.[16] In the group marked (b) are included: two *Kapila-Gītās*,[17] *Haṁsa-Gītā*,[18] *Bhikṣu-Gītā*,[19] *Devī-Gītā*,[20] *Gaṇeśa-Gītā*,[21] two *Brahma-Gītās*,[22] *Sūta-Gītā*,[23] three *Yama-Gītās*,[24] *Śiva-Gītā*,[25] two *Rāma-Gītās*,[26] *Sūrya-Gītā*,[27] and *Vasiṣṭha-Gītā*.[28] Under the group marked (c) come four works: *Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā*, *Avadhūta-Gītā*, *Uttara-Gītā*, and *Pāṇḍava-Gītā*. The names *Īśvara-Gītā*,[29]

[1] The references to the *Mbh.*, given here are according to Pratap Chandra Roy's Edition.

[2] *Mbh.*, XII. 90-91.

[3] *Ibid.*, XII. 92-94.

[4] *Ibid.*, XII. 125-128.

[5] *Ibid.* XII. 167.

[6] *Ibid.*, XII. 176. In the Kumbhakonam Ed. *Samyāka* occurs in the place of *Sampāka*.

[7] *Ibid.*, XII. 177.

[8] *Ibid.*, XII. 178.

[9] *Ibid.*, XII. 264.

[10] *Ibid.*, XII. 277.

[11] *Ibid.*, XII. 278-279.

[12] *Ibid.*, XII. 290-298.

[13] *Ibid.*, XII. 299.

[14] *Ibid.*, XIII. 35.

[15] *Ibid*, XIV 16-51.

[16] *Ibid.*, XIV. 20-34.

[17] *Bhāg.*, III. 25-33. The second one is attributed to the *Padma Purāṇa*, but not found in its Ānandāśrama Ed. It is believed to be a work expounding mainly Haṭha-yoga and also to contain references to Sufism, Jainism, and Liṅgaism. It will be noted that titles like *Yama-Gītā* and *Brahma-Gītā* present also different tracts having the same title to denote them

[18] *Ibid.*, XI. 13.

[19] *Ibid.*, XI. 23.

[20] *Devī-Bhāg. Purāṇa*, VI. 32-40.

[21] *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*, *Kṛdā-khaṇḍa*, Chs. 138-148.

[22] *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Yajña-vaibhava-khaṇḍa*, *Uttara-bhāga*, Chs. 1-12 and *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, *Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa*, 173-176, respectively.

[23] *Ibid.*, immediately following the above *Gītā*.

[24] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, III. 7, *Agni Purāṇa*, III. 381, and *Nṛsiṁha Purāṇa*, Ch. VIII, res-

Claimed to be part of the *Padma Purāṇa* in the book itself, but not found in the Ānandāśrama Ed. The work is published with commentaries from several places. The Gauḍīya recension of the *Padma Purāṇa* may be consulted for its source.

[26] *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, VII. 5. The second one in eighteen chapters is said to be from the *Guru-jñāna-vāsiṣṭha-tattva-sārāyaṇa*.

[27] Consisting of five chapters of the *Karma-kāṇḍa* of the last named book.

[28] *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, *Nirvāṇa-prakaraṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*, Chs. 39-40.

[29] *Vide*, B. S. *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*, II. 1. 14 and II. 3. 45.

Hari-Gītā,[30] and *Vyāsa-Gītā*[31] in all probability refer to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* only and no other work.

Besides the thirty-six 'Gītās' mentioned above, there is another class of composition which may be brought under the expression 'Later Gītā Literature', and may be marked as (d). Some of these are synopses and other glorifications of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the notable example of the former being the *Arjunopākhyāna* in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*[32] and that of the latter its precis in the *Agni Purāṇa*, III. 380. *Gītā-māhātmya*, which eulogizes the merits of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* setting forth rewards for those who learn it and live up to its teachings, *aṅga-nyāsa* (ceremonious touching of one's own body with specified fingers), and *kara-nyāsa* (finger-poses advised for conventional self-purification) are given in many printed editions of the *Gītā* as a preliminary for its ceremonial recitation. One such *Gītā-māhātmya* in eighteen chapters is found in the Ānandāśrama Edition of the *Padma Purāṇa*. Others are said to exist in Purāṇas such as *Varāha*, *Vāyu*, and *Śiva*.

PROBABLE ORIGIN

When and wherefore did all these books and tracts arise? A tentative answer to this question and a short account of the teachings contained in these books are now given. Tilak, Vaidya, and other scholars say that the text of the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as we have it now, took shape from about the fifth to the third century B.C. In their opinion the creative and speculative genius of India was in a ferment at that time; there was then a general revolt against the narrow ritualism[33] of the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas. The unquestioning followers of the *karma-kāṇḍa* (that part of the Veda dealing with sacrificial rites) were, for instance, characterized in the *Gītā* as *avipaścitaḥ* (ignoramuses) and as persons attached to the unstable *guṇas* of Nature. Arjuna, the aspirant, was asked to give up all attachments to the three *guṇas*, i.e. to overcome the *dvandva* (desires and aversions, pleasures and pains), to abandon all worries relating to the acquisition and preservation of material wealth, and to concentrate his attention on the realization of Reality (*Ātma-tattva*) which is of eternal value.

All earnest and sincere thinkers began to ask questions of perennial interest as those found in the opening verse of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. Different inquirers gave different tentative answers to those questions regarding the origin, sustenance, and dissolution of the world of experience, and the means to overcome the miseries of the world. To these may be

[30] *Mbh.*, XII. 346. 10 and 348. 8, 53.
[31] *Vyāsa-Gītā* means only the song of Vyāsa.
[32] *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, *Nirvāṇa-prakaraṇa*, *Pūrvārdha*, Chs. 52-58.
[33] *B.G.*, II. 42-45.

traced the rise and growth of the *āstika darśanas* (the orthodox systems of philosophy), the Bhāgavata Āgama, Pāśupata Āgama, and the like, and the *nāstika darśanas* (the unorthodox systems) like those of the Cārvākas, Jains, and Buddhists also arose out of this enquiring spirit. The believers acknowledged the authority of the Vedas in varying degrees. The unbelievers totally denied the authority of the Vedas. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* succeeded not only in co-ordinating and harmonizing the apparently conflicting views of the *āstika darśanas*, but also in effectively combating the unorthodox view of the Cārvākas. Chapters five to fifteen of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* bring out this synthesis prominently. Chapter sixteen dealing with the *āsurī sampad* exposes the fallacies of the unbelievers. In the *Gītā* the non-sentient Prakṛti or Pradhāna of the Sāṁkhya-Yoga system was assimilated into the *aparā*-Prakṛti of Parameśvara (the supreme Divinity); and the Puruṣas were accepted as His *parā*-Prakṛti. The Parameśvara of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is identified with the Īśvara of the *yogins*, the Bhagavat of the Bhāgavatas, and the Brahman of the Vedāntins. The performance of the Vedic rites advocated by the Karma-Mīmāṁsakas, and the renunciation of all rites advocated by the Vedāntins, are also harmonized here by showing that all works must be done without any attachment, without any expectation of reward, and in a spirit of dedication to the highest Deity, Parameśvara. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya points out in his introduction to the *Gītā-bhāṣya* that the *Gītā* mainly deals with two topics: (1) the ultimate Reality to be realized and (2) the means of realizing the ultimate Reality. This synthesis and these harmonized teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* appealed not only to the intellectuals, but had a wider appeal. Enlightened teachers of the Vedic religion felt the necessity of propagating these teachings, which were the best fitted to combat the doctrines of the Jains and the Buddhists. The Jains tried to claim outstanding Vedic seers like Ariṣṭanemi and Ṛṣabha as their Tīrthaṅkaras. They poured forth abuse on Śrī Kṛṣṇa and contended that he was ultimately converted to Jainism. The Jātaka tales of the Buddhists narrated that Śrī Rāma was a previous *avatāra* of the Buddha. All this insidious propaganda required strong counter-propaganda. The expounders of the Vedic religion began, therefore, to propagate illustrative expositions, commentaries, and glorifications of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. They tried their utmost to encourage and extol the understanding, observance, and practice of the synthetic position adopted by the *Gītā*, which may be summed up in the words *Brahma-jñāna*, *Vāsudeva-bhakti*, and *niṣkāma-karma*. The *Mahābhārata* contains brief commentaries and illustrative examples of most of the important verses of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The various tracts in the *Mahābhārata* bearing the title 'Gītā' can be held to have arisen in this way.

A. GITĀS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: ANU-GITĀ AND BRĀHMAṆA-GITĀ

The longest and the most prominent of the 'Gītās' in the *Mahābhārata* are the *Anu-Gītā* and the *Brāhmaṇa-Gītā*. They emphasize the pre-eminence of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by saying that it is quite sufficient to enable one to realize the ultimate Reality. Arjuna nonchalantly tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa that he has forgotten the teachings imparted to him on the field of battle and requests Him to repeat it once again. Śrī Kṛṣṇa replies in a tone of vexation: 'O Arjuna, it is impossible even for me to restate those teachings entirely with the same intensity, cogency, and clarity; they are quite sufficient to enable one to realize the ultimate Reality. I am very much displeased with you, for you have disappointed me by the deficiency of your attention and understanding; still I shall explain the cardinal teachings by means of illustrative stories.' Then follow the allegories, parables, and the *Brāhmaṇa-Gītā*—the colloquy between the preceptor and the pupil. The name *Anu-Gītā* suggests that the teachings contained in it are in accordance with those of the *Gītā*. The goal it sets forth is freedom from the cycle of birth, decay, and death. Bondage arises from a sense of plurality. It is this consciousness of plurality that causes the duality of pleasure and pain incidental to successive births and deaths. Freedom comes when unity is realized. Therefore, *buddhi* (understanding) must be trained; it is the trainee (*śiṣya*); and the teacher (*guru*) who imparts this training is Parameśvara.

UTATHYA-GITĀ AND VĀMADEVA-GITĀ

The text around which the *Utathya-Gītā* is woven is 'the observance and practice of *dharma*'. As this is inserted in the sub-*parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* dealing with *rāja-dharma*, it dwells mainly on the right conduct of the king, and is like a continuous commentary on a *Gītā*-verse.[34] The king should not do as he pleases; he should be guided by his *dharma*, namely, the protection of his subjects. The world-process is established in *dharma*, and so the king must protect *dharma* in all its aspects and should not injure it; by injuring *dharma* everything is ruined. As *dharma* increases, the prosperity of the State increases. As *dharma* wanes, the king and his kingdom wane. The king should eschew selfishness, conceit, pride, and anger, and all immoral traffic with women. He should unify his kingdom, spend freely for public works, and for the benefit of his subjects; he should speak sweetly and avoid tyranny, and be clean and pure in morals. Here the word '*dharma*' is used in the sense of 'rules of right conduct', which must be understood and practised by all. *Vāmadeva-Gītā* also dwells on the observance of *rāja-dharma*. It states that the king should

[34] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 45.

possess self-mastery, must be a *jitendriya.* He should control anger; should avoid all empty words; and his aim should be not personal gratification, but the well-being of his subjects. He should neither be elated by success nor depressed by failures. Even in war he should observe *dharma,* for victory gained by fraud is no victory. He should protect the good and weed off the wicked. .

ṚṢABHA GITĀ, ṢAḌAJA-GITĀ, AND SAMPĀKA-GITĀ

The first of these two emphasizes the abandonment of greed and avarice. Every one says 'This is mine', regarding the accumulated wealth of the world. The king must control the entire wealth of his kingdom and use it for *yajña,* work done for the good of the world in a spirit of detachment and dedication to God. One must exalt oneself by such selfless work; one should not be depressed. The name *Ṣaḍaja-Gītā* is given to the second piece, because it consists of the statements of six persons, the five Pāṇḍavas and Vidura, as to what is best for a person. Vidura says: The wealth of one's self consists in wide learning, sincere and intense concentration on the work on hand, renunciation of all selfishness, faith in the teachings of the Śāstras and *gurus,* work done without attachment and for the good of the world, forgiveness and forbearance, a clean mind free from all bias and prejudice, kindness and sympathy to all beings, truthfulness, and self-control. Arjuna says: The king should concentrate his attention on wealth of the State; he should encourage agriculture, cattle-breeding, commerce, arts and crafts, and skilled labour. He should provide amenities for all his subjects and punish the wicked, and also realize that ignorance leads to darkness and knowledge to light. Nakula and Sahadeva say: Pre-eminence must be given to *dharma,* because *artha* and *kāma* will prosper only if *dharma* is maintained and because the world will go to ruin if *dharma* is injured. Bhīmasena says: All the three ends, *dharma, artha,* and *kāma,* must be pursued with equal importance, and no invidious distinction should be made among them. He reminds his brothers that all persons—be they *ṛṣis,* scholars, cultivators, cattle-breeders, or merchants—are in their vocations actuated by desire. Yudhiṣṭhira says: All beings subject to the continuous cycle of birth, decay, and death, desire to get release from it, but they do not understand what this release is and how it comes. Release comes only to him who is not attached to merit and demerit, or to *dharma, artha,* and *kāma,* and who has freed himself from all dualities, who maintains a balanced mind, and who looks on gold and clay, desire and aversion, and pleasure and pain, with indifference, and who does the duty allotted to him with detachment. The *Sampāka-Gītā* tells that one should not be elated by successes nor depressed by failures.

Possession of wealth leads to pride and conceit, and loss of wealth prompts one to acquire it by all foul means. Renunciation verily leads to Bliss.

MAṄKI-GITA

This treatise answers the question: 'How should a man behave, who wants to lead a normal life and also attain *niḥśreyasa* (highest good)?' The aspirant must develop equanimity; he must be free from restlessness, be truthful, be indifferent to opulence or poverty, and cease from speculations (building castles in the air). The mind is full of different kinds of desires; it is a wonder that it does not burst by bloating. All acquisitions are lost; still the mind does not learn a lesson. The desire to accumulate wealth is a worry; the loss of acquisition is worse than death; and the separation from all the accumulated possessions is indescribable misery. The man of wealth is killed by robbers; he undergoes all kinds of sufferings; and with all that, he persists in accumulating wealth. The *buddhi* must be fixed in *yoga*; the internal organ must be fixed on right knowledge; the mind must be fixed on Brahman; then alone will there be cessation from attachment. Then the aspirant will say: Perish all greed, avarice, and miserliness. Indifference to riches or poverty, contentment and satisfaction, equanimity and truthfulness, self-control and forbearance, and kindness, forgiveness, and sympathy for all beings—these must develop in me. In this state I enter Brahman as one enters a cool tank in summer, and attains peace and quietness. This peace obtained by the disappearance of all desires is sixteen times more than the proverbial happiness enjoyed in *svargaloka* (heaven). I kill all my seven enemies, i.e. *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), and *mada* (intoxication), *mātsarya* (carping spirit), and *ahaṅkāra* (egoism), and enter the indestructible world of Brahman and rule there like a king. Maṅki developed this mentality and renounced all desires and attained the bliss of Brahman.

BODHYA-GITA, VICAKHNU-GITA, AND HARITA-GITA

The *Bodhya-Gītā*[35] gives examples of persons who gave up desire and attained bliss: Janaka the king, Piṅgalā the courtesan, Kurara the bird, the serpent, the Sāraṅga, the archer, and the maiden. Janaka says that though Mithilā (his capital city) may burn, nothing belonging to him burns. Piṅgalā says that she has become indifferent whether a lover comes or not and that she sleeps well. The bird throws off the carrion, and it is not therefore pursued by the kite. The serpent does not care to build houses. The Sāraṅga lives without hunting any creature. The archer

[35] Similarity of this *Gītā* with *Bhāg.*, XI is noteworthy.

intent on his marks does not care for the king passing by. The maiden pounds the rice without attracting anybody, because she breaks all her jingling bangles. *Vicakhnu-Gītā* condemns the killing of animals under the pretence of *yajña*. *Yajña* is really Viṣṇu ; and He has to be worshipped with milk and flowers. The eating of flesh and fish and the drinking of alcoholic liquors are not countenanced by the Vedas. *Hārīta-Gītā* contains the rules of conduct to be observed by *sannyāsins*. They should abandon all desires and be free from fear of all sorts. They should not look at the faults of others nor speak of them ; they should not injure any being, or entertain hatred for anyone. They should quietly endure all hardships, mental or physical, and remain unaffected by praise, censure, abuse, or insult ; they should bless their oppressors and use sweet words to them ; they should never make any bitter or caustic remarks. *Sannyāsins* should not allow themselves to be invited to dinner, or to be honoured in any way ; they should not expect sweet articles of food, or blame any food given to them cooked or uncooked ; they should be satisfied with a small quantity of any kind of food, and must always appear cheerful and contented, mild and self-controlled, and they must maintain silence and equanimity. *Sannyāsins* should not live in any house, or keep company with others. Ensuring safety to all living beings, one goes out of his house as a *sannyāsin* and enters the world of light freed from all limitations.

VṚTRA-GĪTĀ, PARĀŚARA-GĪTĀ, AND HAṀSA-GĪTĀ

One sees all beings whirled in the cycle of *saṁsāra*, enjoying pleasures and suffering miseries in accordance with their good and bad deeds. What is the cause of all this? The answer is: The Jīva attains its eternal and permanent state only by gaining the knowledge of the *tattva* (Reality) and *māhātmya* (glory) of Viṣṇu by the practice of sense-control.[36] This is the theme of the *Vṛtra-Gītā*. The central question of the *Parāśara-Gītā* is, 'What leads to the highest goal?' The answer is, '*Dharma* leads to *mokṣa*'. In order to practise *dharma* the mind must be made pure, powerful, and steady by associating always with good men and noticing only the good points. In this connection, the famous chariot allegory of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is discussed. The mind purified, strengthened, and made one-pointed, realizes the immanent Ātman and experiences oneness with the Brahman. A résumé of the *dharmas* of the various *varṇas* and *āśramas* also is found here. It is tellingly emphasized that all extremes must be avoided and that instead of a long laborious course, short pithy courses must be pursued with intensity and sincerity. *Haṁsa-Gītā* teaches the

[36] Cf. *B.G.*, XIII. 12-27 and XVIII. 46-63 and *Bhāg.*, VI. 7-17.

necessity of developing the qualities of truthfulness, self-control, forbearance, and forgiveness in order to get a firm grasp of the nature of the ultimate Reality. These qualities, when developed, will break all bonds and barriers, and will place the aspirant above all temptations. He must avoid all bitter and caustic words and cruel actions, and control the urges of the five organs; speech, hand, feet, anus, and the generative organ. The most pithy verse here states: 'The secret doctrine of the Upaniṣads is *satya* (ultimate Truth), *satya* leads to self-control, self-control leads to *mokṣa*.

B. GITĀS IN THE PURĀṆAS

The Vedic religion expounds the goal and the means; the goal is *tattva-jñāna*, knowledge of the Reality, which is expounded in the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, while the means to it is expounded in the *upāsanā-kāṇḍa* and the *karma-kāṇḍa*. In expounding the *dharma* taught by the Vedas, the preceptors sought to co-ordinate and harmonize all the texts and to resolve the apparent contradictions in them. This is known as the synthetic method (*ekavākyatā* or *samanvaya*). In the *Karma-Mīmāṁsā* the texts of the *karma-kāṇḍa* are sought to be co-ordinated and harmonized. In the *Śārīraka-Mīmāṁsā* the texts of the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* are sought to be co-ordinated, harmonized, and explained. The theory about the goal and the practice laid down for its attainment must also be harmonized with each other. The Upaniṣads and the *Śārīraka-Sūtras* lay greater emphasis on *tattvajñāna*. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* further emphasizes the practice of the means of attainment. Freedom from bondage comes only to him who in his daily life sincerely practises[37] *niṣkāma-karma* enunciated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which demands unbounded *prema-bhakti* (loving devotion) to Parameśvara. *Tattvajñāna* and *Parameśvara-bhakti* must therefore exist together and work together for their mutual development and final consummation. Any system of religious philosophy which does not bestow equal importance on both these branches will be defective. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[38] brings out this point prominently by saying: The practice of *dharma* generates *bhakti*, *bhakti* generates *vairāgya* (dispassion), these two together generate *jñāna*, and all the three must function jointly to enable the *sādhaka* to realize, integrally and differentially, the Reality called Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavat. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya propounded the Advaita system establishing the synthetic unity of the *Prasthāna-traya* (the triple foundation of Vedānta) by applying the synthetic method to it and harmonizing the teachings contained therein. To bring out this harmony prominently,

[37] *Vide B.G.*, III. 31, 32.

[38] *Bhāg.*, I. 2. 6-11.

he had to bring the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to the forefront and glorify it as a work of great authority, as weighty as the Upaniṣads and the *Śārīraka-Sūtras*. All the great spiritual preceptors who appeared after him followed his example and adopted the same method. Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Bhedābhedādvaita—all sought the sanction of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. All of them sought to establish that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* supported their particular doctrine. When they could not directly get the sanction of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, they composed Gītās to fit their cults by imitating the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, or copying from it without acknowledgement. Such are *Rāma-Gītā*, *Sūrya-Gītā*, *Gaṇeśa-Gītā*, *Devī-Gītā*, *Śiva-Gītā*, and the like. Just as the *Bhagavad-Gītā* speaks of Vāsudeva[11] as Parameśvara, the other Gītās speak of Rāma, Sūrya, Gaṇapati, the Goddess, Śiva, and the like, as the highest Deity according to their predilections.

THE GITAS FOUND IN THE BHAGAVATA PURAṆA

Kapila-Gītā introduces the conception of Īśvara (the supreme Being) into the Sāṁkhya system, which does not accept the Īśvara or God. The keynote of this *Gītā* is that freedom from transmigration can be attained only by the realization of the ultimate Reality, designated as Puruṣottama, Bhagavat, and Vāsudeva, by intense *bhakti*, *vairāgya*, and *jñāna*. Its author Kapila is claimed to be an incarnation, who came with the object of teaching Self-knowledge to all men and women. Emphasis is laid on the point that the mind engrossed in the *guṇas* causes bondage and in union with the supreme Being leads to freedom. In the *Rudra-Gītā*, Rudra initiates the sons of Prācīnabarhis called the Prācetas into the doctrine of loving devotion to Vāsudeva. He expounds the great dictum *Tat-tvam-asi* (Thou art That) and stresses the performance of works in accordance to the duties of the caste and orders of life for generating mental purity and intense devotion to the Lord, Vāsudeva, for realizing the ultimate Reality enunciated by the said *mahāvākya*. It is an attempt to bridge the gulf separating the Vaiṣṇavas from the Śaivas. *Haṁsa-Gītā* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement to Uddhava of the doctrine which Vāsudeva gave to Sanaka and others, expounding the dictum *So'ham*—I am That. The Jīvātman and Paramātman are different from the five sheaths. These five sheaths arise by the various interactions of Prakṛti, its *guṇas*, and the mind in the states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. To realize the ultimate Reality, the Prakṛti and its interactions must be clearly distinguished from the actionless, changeless, eternal Ātman ; the Ātman must be meditated upon with supreme purity and *bhakti*. The *Bhikṣu-Gītā* contains Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teachings to Uddhava to illustrate the truism that 'wealth leads to misery'

[11] *B.G.*, VII. 19 and VIII. 27.

(*artham anartham*). A Brāhmaṇa who followed a profession unlawful to him and amassed great wealth by fraud, theft, and other foul means, and did not put it to any good use, alienated everybody by his miserliness and became miserable. He in his old age realized the truth and exclaimed: 'Alas! How much time and energy have I wasted in acquiring all these perishable articles, in safeguarding them, and finally in mourning over their loss; if all this mis-spent energy had been spent in acquiring the imperishable One, Vāsudeva, how great would have been my gain!'

THE DEVI-GITA, GAṆEŚA-GITA, AND ŚIVA-GITA

These are imitations of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, closely following it in scheme, form, substance, and language. They aim to give a solution of the riddle of the round of births (*saṁsāra*), with all its sorrows and miseries, and they also describe the eager yearning of souls in bondage to overcome these miseries. All these Gītās contain descriptions of the Vision of Universal form of the Deity similar to that found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. These Gītās ask questions about the cause of bondage and misery, and the way to remove them; they are answered more or less in the same fashion, in the light of the Advaita Vedānta, as expounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. All of them refer to the *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda* (the theory of combining pure Knowledge with rituals) refuted by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in his *bhāṣyas* and reject it as unsound and opposed to reason. Birth, decay and death, and pleasure and pain, incidental to *saṁsāra* are experienced as real only by reason of *māyā* (nescience) and *adhyāsa* (misapprehension). The removal of this nescience is freedom, the only means to which is *jñāna*, the realization of the ultimate Reality, and it can be developed only by *niṣkāma-karma*, *bhakti*, and *yoga*.

The *Devī-Gītā* is a dialogue in nine chapters between Devī Pārvatī and her father Himavat. The Goddess asked Himavat to equate and identify I, you, and He, then to transcend the personal and realize the impersonal. Himavat was puzzled, and asked the Goddess to explain how this could be done. She, in reply, propounds to him the Advaita doctrine as expounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, and tells him that the Advaita experience can be obtained only by meditation on the Upaniṣad texts like *Tattvamasi*. Such meditation and realization are possible only to the strong and the pure in mind. To develop that degree of mental strength and purity, good and pure works according to the caste and orders of life must be performed without selfishness, attachment, and expectation of any reward, and in a spirit of dedication to the Goddess. This is the gist of the first chapter of the book. The other chapters deal with the universal form of the Goddess, meditation on the major texts of the Upaniṣads, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*,

the *yogas* of *jñāna*, *karma*, and *bhakti*, location of the temples dedicated to the Goddess and Her Vedic and Tāntric worship. The *Gaṇeśa-Gītā* is a dialogue in eleven chapters between King Vareṇya and Gaṇeśa. Vareṇya asks, 'what is *yoga*?' Gaṇeśa answers that *yoga* is the realization of the fundamental unity underlying the apparent diversities of the world of experience. Real *yoga* consists in apprehending the identity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara and others with Gaṇeśa, who is the ultimate Reality.

The *Śiva-Gītā* consists of sixteen chapters. The first chapter recites the *guru-paramparā* (the succession of teachers). Chapters two and three stage how Sage Agastya initiated Śrī Rāma into *Śiva-dīkṣā*. Chapters four to sixteen form a dialogue between Śrī Rāma and his chosen Deity Śiva. Agastya asks him what he is sorrowing over, the body called Sītā or the Jīva-Sītā. If it is the body that he is sorrowing over, he must see that the body is made up of perishable substances; so there is no point in sorrowing over that which must of necessity perish. If it is the Jīva, he must realize that the Jīva is identical with the eternal and imperishable Brahman, and so there is no point in sorrowing over it, being eternal. Agastya thus propounds to Śrī Rāma the Advaita Vedānta doctrine as expounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. Śrī Rāma asks Agastya how he is to disbelieve the universe of actual experience. Agastya then initiates Śrī Rāma into *Śiva-dīkṣā* and advises him to propitiate Śiva and to get from Śiva the solution of the problem. Chapters four and five state how Śrī Rāma worships Śiva and gets a vision of the origin, sustenance, and destruction of this empirical universe, that he has already killed Rāvaṇa and other evil-doers, or in other words the evil-doers have been killed by their own evil-doings, and that Śrī Rāma can easily kill Rāvaṇa by being the proximate cause (*nimitta*)[40] of it. Śrī Rāma then asks how this form of Umā-Maheśvara can be the ultimate Reality. Śiva quotes several Upaniṣadic texts and retails more or less the *vibhūtis* given in chapters nine and ten of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This is the subject of chapter six, and the next one describes the universal form of Śiva as seen by Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma's praise of Śiva sounds like Arjuna's praise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.[41] In chapter eight Śiva answers how the bodies of creatures are developed. Chapter nine deals with the physiology (*bhūta bhautika*) and psychology (*citta caittika*) of the human body. Chapter ten deals with the *svarūpa*, intrinsic nature, of the Jīva. The details given are in consonance with the teachings of Advaita Vedānta; the individual soul is really the same as Brahman, and transcends the senses and the intellect. When it is joined to *upādhis* (conditioning factors), it is called Jīva; when there is no *upādhi*, it is Brahman. Chapter eleven deals with the journey of the conditioned Jīva after death, taking either

[40] *B.G.*, XI. 33.

[41] *Ibid.*, XI. 36-45.

of the two paths beginning with the flame or with smoke, leading respectively to gradual liberation or return to this earth through *candraloka*, the world of the moon. Chapter twelve says that the worship of Śiva has to be done both as the supreme Deity and as *sarvāntaryāmin* (the immanent Deity).[42] Chapter eight speaks of the nature of *mukti*; and its kinds *sālokya* (residence in the same sphere), *sāmīpya* (proximity), *sārūpya* (similarity in form), and *sāyujya* (unity) are then explained. The final conclusion is that real *mukti* is the realization of the ultimate Reality, attained only by *jñāna*. Chapter fourteen speaks of the five sheaths and explains how they have to be differentiated, subordinated to, and distinguished from, the Ātman by discrimination and dispassion. The chariot allegory of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is here referred to. Chapter fifteen explains the essentials of *bhakti*. Chapter sixteen describes the *adhikārin* (person competent) to learn and practise these teachings.

BRAHMA-GITĀ, SŪTA-GITĀ, YAMA-GITĀ

The first two of these are found in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and are not modelled on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. They treat about the ultimate Reality styled as Śiva, the One without a second (Advaita). The three *Yama-Gītās* glorify Viṣṇu and give details of His *upāsanā* and *pūjā* (internal and external worship). They remind us of the story of Ajāmila in the *Bhāgavata*, Book Six, in so far as they refer to the orders issued by the god of Death to his servants, that they should not molest votaries of Viṣṇu. These *Gītās* encourage fearlessness in the face of death; such fearlessness is called *mukti*. *Viṣṇu-bhakti* thus leads to fearlessness and *mukti*. This raises the question, 'What is *Viṣṇu-bhakti*?' A person with a strong, pure, and well-balanced mind, who never thinks, speaks, or does evil or injury to another, who is kind and sympathetic to all, and who steadily performs all the duties of his caste and order of life is a *Viṣṇu-bhakta*. But a person who is selfish, who covets the wealth and women of others, who causes injury to others to gain his selfish ends, who kills without mercy, who is envious, who does no good turn to his neighbours, and whose mind is always full of foul thoughts, does not find favour with the Deity, Janārdana. The other *Kapila-Gītā* deals with Haṭha-yoga mainly, and it appears to be post-Islamic.

RĀMA-GITĀ

The *Rāma-Gītā* of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* propounds the perennial philosophy of Advaita Vedānta as expounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, stressing

[42] Passages from *Śve. U.*, *Ka. U.*, *M. Nār. U.*, and *T.S.* are borrowed here and ideas from *B.S.*, III. 3.

Brahman (here equated with Śrī Rāma) as the absolute Reality, nescience as the root of transmigratory existence, and knowledge born of the text 'That Thou art' as the only means of dispelling bondage and nescience, and prescribes purity of mind as the condition for the rise of such knowledge, *nirguṇa upāsanā* (formless meditation) as a means of *niruddha-samādhi* (unperturbed absorption), which establishes one in the identity with the Absolute, and devout service and worship of Śrī Rāma till one is rendered fit for that. The *Rāma-Gītā* of the *Guru-jñāna-vāsiṣṭha-tattva-sārāyaṇa* is a very long text consisting of about a thousand *ślokas* in eighteen chapters. It is in the form of a dialogue between the aspirant Hanumat and Śrī Rāma. The perennial philosophy taught herein is *anubhava-advaita*, which accepts *jñāna-karma-samuccaya* and maintains that a person must perform the duties pertaining to his caste and order of life without attachment and without expectation of any reward and in a spirit of dedication to Parameśvara, even after he has well experienced the ultimate Reality (i.e. after his attaining illumination—*samyag-jñāna*). According to the Advaita view of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, a person who has transcended the body idea (*dehātma-bhāva*), and therefore not affected by pleasure and pain, is a *jīvanmukta* (liberated in life). His working off of his *prārabdha-karma* (momentum of fructifying deeds) with his living body does not interfere with his *mukti*; he is not drawn back into *saṁsāra*. But according to the second *Rāma-Gītā*, a *jīvanmukta* is not a real *mukta*. Real *mukti* is attained only after the falling off of the physical body and attainment of *pūrṇa-jñāna* (perfect illumination). This *Rāma-Gītā* maintains that till *videhamukti* (final release) is attained *jñāna*, *upāsanā*, and *karma* must go jointly. He who eschews one or the other will fall off from the path. The *Guru-jñāna-vāsiṣṭha* refers to the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava varieties of Viśiṣṭādvaita. Chapter one introduces to us Ayodhyā, Śrī Rāma's crystal hall and throne, allegorically made up of *śruti-vākyas*, *maharṣis*, and *vidyās*. Śrī Rāma is there represented with conch, discus, and mace like Vāsudeva. He is in *niruddha-samādhi*. He comes down to *vyutthāna-samādhi*. There Hanumat sees him, who requests him to explain the Impersonal Parabrahman. This is the main question. In chapter two Śrī Rāma answers that the Impersonal Parabrahman can be realized only by an aspirant meditating on the *veda-vākyas* (scriptural sentences). By meditating on the teachings of even one of the Upaniṣads, the *Māṇḍūkya*, one attains *mukti*—*jīvanmukti* first and then *videhamukti*. The Upaniṣadic teachings about the Impersonal Absolute should be taught only to dear obedient sons, devoted disciples, or *bhaktas*, and not to atheists and evil-doers. Chapter three says that mere learning of the Upaniṣadic texts is not sufficient, but it must be accompanied by loving meditation on the

sat-cit-ānanda aspect of the Parabrahman with the aid of the Upaniṣadic texts. Chapters four and five explain in detail *jīvanmukti* through *samyag-jñāna* and *videhamukti* through *pūrṇa-jñāna*. Chapter six stresses the importance of the absolute eradication of all *vāsanās* (latent dispositions). Chapter eight explains the seven steps in the process of spiritual advancement, viz. *śubhecchā* (spiritual eagerness), *vicāraṇā* (contemplation), *tanumānasī* (attenuation of the mind stuff), *sattvāpatti* (attainment of peace), *anāśakti* (detachment), *padārtha-bhāvanā* (conception of Truth), and *turīya* (the fourth state of the Self). The nature of *samādhi*, *savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka*, is also explained here. *Savikalpaka* type of *samādhi* is either *dṛśyānuviddha* (attached to the mind stuff) or *śabdānuviddha* (attached to the Upaniṣadic texts prescribed for meditation). *Śabdānuviddha* is also called *samprajñāta*. *Nirvikalpaka* is called *asamprajñāta*. It falls into three stages: (a) *niḥsaṅkalpa*, (b) *nirvitarka* and (c) *nirvāsana*. Chapter nine details the various *dharmas* and *ācāras* (prescribed practices) of the castes and orders of life, and stresses the extreme necessity of following and observing them till death. Chapter ten explains the nature and functions of the *sañcita* (accumulated), *āgāmin* (prospective), and *prārabdha* (fructifying) varieties of *karmas* (actions productive of results). Chapter eleven explains the various types of aspirants according to their inherent dispositions. Chapter twelve contains a description of Śrī Rāma's universal form. Chapter thirteen explains the 256 *mantras* of the *Praṇava*. Chapter fourteen sets forth the four great dictums of the four Vedas and explains them. Chapter fifteen discusses the subject of the *nava-cakras* (yogic centres in the body). Chapter sixteen examines the efficacy of the *siddhis* (miraculous attainments mentioned by *yogins*), and condemns the desire to attain them as they are all obstructions in the path of *mukti*—*Samādhau upasarga*.[43] Chapter seventeen explains the *vidyās*: (1) *Satya-vidyā*, (2) *Dahara-vidyā*, (3) *Vaiśvānara-vidyā*, (4) *Pañcāgni-vidyā*, (5) *Ṣoḍaśakalā-vidyā*, (6) *Udgītha-vidyā*, (7) *Śāṇḍilya-vidyā*, (8) *Puruṣa-vidyā*, (9) *Paryaṅka-vidyā*, (10) *Akṣara-vidyā*, (11) *Saṁvarga-vidyā*, (12) *Madhu-vidyā*, (13) *Prāṇa-vidyā*, (14) *Upakosala-vidyā*, (15) *Sad-vidyā*, and (16) *Bhūmā-vidyā*. Chapter eighteen contains a synopsis of the whole work.

SŪRYA-GITĀ

The teachings of the *Sūrya-Gītā* are similar to those of the *Rāma-Gītā*. Whereas in the *Rāma-Gītā* the Immanent Divine is Rāma, here it is Śiva; the philosophy taught is thus Śivādvaita. *Mukti* is attained by the combined practice of *jñāna*, *karma*, and *upāsanā*. He who abandons one or

[43] *Yoga-Sūtras*, III. 36.

other of these will fall off from the path. It makes mention of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita. The first two chapters of the work are introductory. Brahmā asks Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Śiva facing south as teacher of supreme knowledge) to explain how this world of sense-experience has come out of the supersensual, impersonal First Cause, Brahman. Dakṣiṇāmūrti reproduces the dialogue between Aruṇa and Sūrya. Aruṇa asks Sūrya to explain to him the evolution as well as the involution of this universe of experience. The answer shortly is this: The Universe of experience or *saṁsāra* is the result of the deeds of the Jīva. The *vyavahārika-saṁsārin* (the empirical transmigratory soul) is the Jīva who performs good and bad actions. The *prātibhāsika-saṁsārin* (the apparent transmigratory soul) is Īśvara. The Parabrahman who is the ultimate cause of these *saṁsārins* and their *saṁsāra* is *asaṁsārin* (has no *saṁsāra*). Good and bad actions are actuated by good and bad *vāsanās* (tendencies) and *saṁskāras* (impressions). As long as deeds are performed, the *saṁsāra* will persist for the doer, and they are of five kinds: (1) *Tāntrika*, (2) *Paurāṇika*, (3) *Smārta*, (4) *Vaidika*, and (5) *Aupaniṣada*. By leaving off the first four kinds and by performing only the last variety called *upāsanā*, the aspirant develops *Aupaniṣada-jñāna*. Thus *karma*, *upāsanā*, and *jñāna* must go together. Chapter three explains the *svarūpa* (real nature) of the immanent Śiva (in Sūrya) as *satyam-jñānam-anantam*, and gives all the *nitya-vibhūtis* (eternal attributes) of Śiva. Chapter four explains Śiva's *līlā-vibhūtis* (playful attributes). Chapter five explains the attributes of the *karmī-śreṣṭha*, which is analogous to those of the *sthitaprajña* in the *Gītā*.[44]

The *Brahma-Gītā* and *Vasiṣṭha-Gītā* of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* are both expositions of Advaita Vedānta. They are couched in the form of questions by Śrī Rāma and answered by Vasiṣṭha. The main question is, 'How can this sensual world of experience be identical with the supersensual Brahman?' The answer is Advaita-realization as expounded in the Upaniṣads.

D. THE INDEPENDENT GITAS

The *Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā*, in twenty-one chapters, is a dialogue between Aṣṭāvakra and Janaka of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It concerns itself with the one question, 'How to attain freedom from *saṁsāra*?' The answer is that freedom comes only with the realization of the ultimate non-dual Reality. If anybody wants to be free from birth, decay, and death, he must first eschew all evil and develop good qualities like universal kindness and friendliness. He must meditate on the Ātman, the One without

[44] *B.G.*, II. 55-72.

a second, with the aid of the *neti-neti-ādeśa*, the doctrine of negating what It is not. It means that this phenomenal world of experience is not absolutely real, that behind it is the ultimate Reality, and that the ultimate Reality is the basis of this apparent reality of the phenomenal world. The last chapter is a short subject-index. The *Avadhūta-Gītā* is the ecstatic song of an Avadhūta who realized the ultimate Reality. This Avadhūta is said to be Dattātreya. According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Dattātreya is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the son of Atri and Anasūyā. Literally, the word Avadhūta means 'one who has shaken off all his appendages'—an *ati-varṇāśramin* or a *sannyāsin*. The treatise consists of eight chapters. Chapters one to seven describe the ecstatic experience of the Avadhūta concerning the ultimate Reality. The eighth chapter explains the significance of the four syllables of the word, i.e. *a*, *va*, *dhū*, *ta*. *A* means free from all desires and passions; all-pure and moored in *Ānanda*; *va* means free from all *vāsanās*; *dhū* means the purified mind, though the body is covered with dust; *ta* means fixed in *Tat* after being freed from *ahaṁkāra*. This *Gītā* emphasizes the necessity to overcome the sex-idea and sex-impulse. The *Uttara-Gītā* is a short treatise in three chapters. The first chapter begins with the question of Arjuna to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'How to obtain *Brahma-jñāna* by which one becomes immediately free from *saṁsāra*? How to know the Brahman, which is One, undivided, unknowable, unpredictable, unlimited, beginningless and endless?' The rest of the book consists of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's answer. It stresses the supreme necessity of *Viṣṇu-bhakti*, *vairāgya*, and *yogābhyāsa* along with Upaniṣadic *jñāna*. Everything pertaining to the tongue and sex must be controlled and renounced. With the aid of *bhakti*, *vairāgya*, and *yoga*, *jñāna* can be realized by constant meditation on *Tat*, which transcends all pluralities and predicates and attributes —the Brahman immanent in all. The *Pāṇḍava-Gītā* consists of a number of laudatory stanzas by a number of Bhāgavatas. It extols *bhakti* and *prapatti* (undivided devotion and unqualified surrender) to Viṣṇu as the most effective means to attain freedom from transmigratory existence.

PART III

THE PURĀṆAS

15

INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

MYTHOLOGY is very aptly described as the language of the primitive. What the early man failed to express satisfactorily through the medium of words, he tried to express through the medium of mythological concepts. In their primary form, therefore, myths cannot be said to be the result of poetic invention in the sense which these words now bear. If philosophy attempts to discover the ultimate truth, mythology must be said to represent the human effort to attain at least to the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. As a matter of fact, it is possible to psycho-analyse, so to say, a people by means of a critical study of its mythology.[1] Through their numerous legends of cosmogony, of gods, and of heroes, the Indians have given expression—fuller and finer than any other people in the world—to their beliefs, ideals, and traditions.

Early Vedic Mythology: In the absence of any literature belonging to the pre-Vedic period we cannot make any statement regarding the mythological concepts which were then prevalent. Considering that the Vedic religion is a growth of many centuries and has been elaborated by the fertile and subtle brains of a number of generations of active people, it becomes quite understandable that it should defy any attempt at a sweeping definition in one word. What is true of Vedic religion is equally true of Vedic mythology, for, in the concept of Indian religion, particularly Vedic religion, the elements of religion, mythology, and magic, are inextricably interlaced. It has been suggested that the early Vedic religion is 'Naturalism' pure and simple ; and Vedic mythology can be studied in its proper perspective only on the background of the history of the development of human thought as a whole. It must be emphasized that Vedic mythology is essentially an evolutionary mythology. It has reacted to the many vicissitudes in the life of the Vedic Indians, and, with each vicissitude, new elements have been introduced into the personality of a Vedic god. It is this dynamic process that has been responsible for the complex character of Vedic gods. It is, however, not altogether impossible, through a critical study of Vedic literature with the aid of comparative philology, comparative mythology, and anthropology, to determine, on the one hand, the order in which particular gods have, at different stages, dominated Vedic mythology, and, on the other, to fix the priority of the various elements in the personality

[1] For instance, see H. Zimmer, *Māyā*: *Der indische Mythos* (1936).

of an individual god and thus to present, as it were, a picture of his 'becoming'. Vedic mythology, as we know it from the *Ṛg-Veda*, is clearly dominated by the personality of Indra. But, taking into account the facts of anthropology, comparative mythology, and the history of the Vedic Indians, one may safely conclude that this could not obviously have been the original state of things. Similarly, in post-Vedic mythology Indra has not retained his position as the supreme god in the Indian pantheon. And it is possible to discover, in the Vedic literature itself, the beginnings of this significant mythological event.

Asura Varuṇa: In one of the earliest stages in the development of his religious thought, the Vedic Aryan, like his Aryan cousins, was deeply struck by the vastness and brilliance of nature. He must have soon discovered that this nature is not chaotic or unplanned. Its various phenomena are strictly regulated and controlled even to the minutest detail. In short, they present a picture of 'cosmos'. Consequently, an attempt was made to solve the mystery of this cosmos. And the mythological outcome of this attempt was the concept of Asura Varuṇa.[2] It was imagined that the secret of the regular and planned working of the various phenomena of nature, big and small, lay in the fact that everything in this cosmos was bound down and thus controlled by a great sovereign lord. Philologically the word '*varuṇa*' is derived from the root *vṛ*, meaning 'to bind'. Varuṇa is said to have been enabled to accomplish this mighty feat, because, as the Vedic Indian explained in the light of his own primitive thought, Varuṇa possessed, in the highest possible degree, the universal magic potence-fluid, the *asu* (lit. life). In other words, Varuṇa was Asura, the possessor of *asu par excellence*. He is thus the universal sovereign, the *saṁrāj*, who, from his watery abode, enforces and maintains the cosmic law, *ṛta*.

The emergence of the mythological concept of Varuṇa and his cosmic law *ṛta* indeed represents an event of great significance in the history of the development of Vedic thought as a whole. In course of time an entire, distinct, and almost independent mythology came to be built up on the foundation of the magic-cosmic concept of bondage. The Vedic ideas and allusions relating to Varuṇa, Mitra, Ādityas, and Aditi, can be best understood only on such an assumption. Anthropologically, the mythical concepts of Dyaus and Varuṇa fit in very well with the general thought-pattern of a people in whose life nature was still a *force majeure*. The early Vedic Aryans inevitably emphasized the cosmic view of the world with all its implications. From the historical point of view, the concept of the cosmos and its magician-ruler, the great Asura, seems to have been evolved by the

[2] Dandekar, 'Asura Varuṇa *ABORI*, XXI. pp. 157-91.

ancestors of the Vedic Indians and their Iranian cousins—that is to say, by the people who are specifically called the Aryans—when they lived together, most probably, in their secondary 'Urheimat' (original home) in the Balkh region. The very process of the evolution of what may be called the Varuṇa-religion, as indicated above, will explain why not many mythological legends have been associated with the Vedic divinities. Varuṇa, Mitra, Ādityas, and Aditi.

Indra: From among the common stock of the Aryans responsible for the concept of Asura Varuṇa, some ambitious warlike tribes headed towards India, victoriously fighting their way to the land of the seven rivers. No longer content with the cosmic religion of Varuṇa and *ṛta*, they were in need of a new religion which would suit their new life and activities. Their adoration was, therefore, gradually transferred from the more or less distant and abstract magician-ruler of the cosmos to the more 'real' hero who led them in their glorious battles, namely, Indra. It was then but the natural next step that this 'hero' should be made a 'god'. The major portion of the *Ṛg-Veda* obviously concerns itself with this stage in the evolution of Vedic religious thought. Indra was universally recognized by the Vedic Indians as their national war-god, and so he dominated the entire Vedic mythology. Incidentally it may be pointed out that, on such an assumption, the so-called schism between the Vedic and the ancient Iranian religions becomes historically quite intelligible.

The character of Indra as the national war-god necessarily resulted in the growth of a large number of myths pertaining to that god. The basic form of these myths is represented by Indra's successful encounter with the demon, Vṛtra, and his releasing of the imprisoned cows, waters, or light. In course of time every warlike act and every conceivable superhuman exploit came to be attributed to Indra. He was also regarded as the rain-god, who, by means of his thunderbolt, shattered the cloud-demon, Vṛtra, and thus caused the rain to shower. He thus easily superseded the original Aryan rain-god, Trita Āptya. Attempts are also made to see in Indra the sun-god overpowering the winter-demon. The fact that the nature-myths associated with the Vedic Indra are the result of a conscious superimposition of naturalism on the original heroic character of that god becomes obvious to any critical student of the *Ṛg-Veda*. Indeed, such superimposition of naturalism is a common mythological phenomenon and is clearly seen in respect of several Vedic gods. Another mythological trend which was assimilated with the concept of the Vedic Indra came from the common stock of legends, upon which, as a matter of fact, the mythologies of several peoples in the world have freely drawn. It is the legend of the mythical hero and the dragon. Vṛtra, the original representative leader of the foes

of the Vedic Indians—and later regarded as the cloud-demon, or winter-demon, or the demon of darkness—thus often figures as a terrible dragon, *ahi*, lurching dangerously among the waters.

Mythology connected with Indra tended to become richer and richer by associating him with Soma, Maruts, etc. *Soma*, an intoxicating drink prepared from a plant believed to have hailed from the Mūjavat mountain, played the central rôle in the religious rites of the Aryans in their common abode in the Balkh region, adjoining the Mūjavat. With the rise of the Indra-religion, however, in keeping with the common mythological idea, a kindly but impulsive war-god accomplishing super-human feats under the influence of an intoxicating drink, personified as a god, Soma came to be associated with Indra. The original character of the Maruts, chief among Indra's personal attendants, is vague and shadowy in early Vedic literature. That the Maruts were originally messengers of death would appear from the name Marut (derived from √*mar*, to die) and from their association with the original god of death, Rudra. The well-organized soldierlike group of Maruts caught the fancy of the Vedic poets, who connected them with the war-god Indra. With Indra's emergence as rain-god, the Maruts correspondingly became the storm-gods.

Aśvins: As in the case of Indra, the origin of the concept of Aśvins, the divine twins frequently celebrated in the Vedas as the miracle-working helpers of humanity, is to be sought in some 'real' human heroes. In course of the development of Indian mythology, such historical individuals often tended to become transformed into 'institutions' and became mythical in character. Accordingly, every miraculous act of help came to be assigned to the mythical Aśvins, and a rich crop of mythological legends grew around them. The Aśvins figure as rescuers of Atri from the fiery pit, rejuvenators of the decrepit Cyavana, saviours of Bhujyu from drowning in the mid-ocean, suppliers of an iron leg to the crippled Viśpalā, etc. Legends of more or less similar character evolved round the personality of the three divine artisans, the Ṛbhus.

Agni: Agni, the Vedic fire-god, who stands next in importance to Indra, is essentially a domestic divinity—a divinity which brings the world of man closer to the world of gods. He is variously described as the priest, the mouth or the messenger of gods, and the carrier of the oblations offered to them. Out of this simple cult of fire, partly by combining it with the various *soma* rites and partly by complicating it with the addition of several elements of what Oldenberg very aptly calls 'prescientific science',[3] the Vedic priests later on developed a very complex and elaborate

[3] Oldenberg, *Vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft : Die Weltanschauung der Brāhmaṇa-Texte* (1919).

system of ritual. The early Vedic myths, however, relate mainly to the production, disappearance, and rediscovery of Agni. The Vedic poets often speak of the three forms of Agni—namely, as fire on the earth, as lightning in the mid-region, and as the sun in the sky.

THE SO-CALLED SOLAR DIVINITIES

And this brings us to the 'so-called' solar divinities in the Vedas—'so-called', because many of them can be shown to have originated out of concepts which are essentially different from the solar phenomena. Mitra, for instance, who is generally regarded as the sun-god, belongs originally to the spiritual world dominated by Varuṇa. The idea underlying the concept of Mitra is, again, that of bondage.[4] Mitra presides over pacts and contracts among men, and thus keeps them together (*yātayati*). Broadly speaking, he may be said to be, in respect of the human life, what Varuṇa is in respect of the cosmic life. To the same spiritual world also seems to belong Savitṛ, who stretches out his majestic hands—a gesture most befitting in a cosmic magician-ruler—and sets in motion the orderly functioning of the various aspects of life.[5] The Vedic allusions to Pūṣan make him out to be a pastoral god, who preserves cattle from injury and brings them home safely from the notorious cattle-lifters, the Paṇis.[6] A critical study of the Vedic passages pertaining to Mitra, Savitṛ, and Pūṣan, produces a clear impression of certain solar myths having been superimposed—and that too, in a vague and distant manner—on the original characters of these gods. In the evolution of Vedic mythology, there was indeed a distinct stage when several of its concepts were, so to say, artificially 'solarized'. In some cases, such 'solarization' would seem to have been particularly tendentious.

Viṣṇu: The Vedic religion, as generally known from the early Vedic literature, seems to have been already consolidated into a hieratic religion, dominated by Indra and characterized by the *soma* ritual and the fire-cult. The sponsors of this official religion were naturally averse to the formal adoption and acceptance of the religious ideologies of the common man—ideologies which must be gradually pressing their claim in an unmistakable manner. Such is indeed the case in respect of almost all religions. When, however, the pressure of the popular religious ideologies makes it inevitable for the official religion to adopt them, the priests and poets of the hieratic religion attempt to suppress such elements of the popular religion as are abhorrent to their sophisticated minds, and to transform its original

[4] See 'Asura Varuṇa'.
[5] Dandekar, 'New Light on the Vedic God—Savitṛ'. ABORI, XX. pp. 293-316.
[6] Dandekar, 'Pūṣan, the pastoral god of the Veda'. NIA, V. pp. 49-66.

character by ingeniously superimposing upon it quite alien concepts. That Viṣṇu appears in the Vedas predominantly as a solar divinity is the result of some such mythological process. It can be shown, on the strength of considerable evidence, drawn from Vedic literature and ritual, that Viṣṇu must have originally been a god of fertility and productivity—in other words, a god intrinsically connected with the life of the agricultural and pastoral communities among the Vedic Indians.[7] The name Viṣṇu, derived from the root *vi* meaning 'to fly', means 'a bird'; and, from the anthropological point of view, it is interesting to note that, in several primitive religions, a bird is the symbol of fertility and productivity. When the poets and priests of the hieratic Vedic religion found it necessary to admit this god of the common people in the official pantheon, they tried to set aside the various rites and ideas, suggestive of sexual orgies, which were originally connected with the Viṣṇu-worship. In this connection, a reference may be made to another significant tendency of the Vedic poets. The elevation of a popular god to a place in the hieratic Vedic mythology is usually indicated by that god's being artificially associated with Indra, or with Soma or Agni. Viṣṇu's vague and pointless connection with Indra, as his subordinate ally, would adequately illustrate this peculiar mythological device often employed by Vedic poets. At a later stage in the history of Hindu religion, however, when the peculiar hieratic mentality of the Vedic poets and priests was overwhelmed by the upsurge of really popular religious sentiment—this fact eventually resulting in the prominent Vedic gods being put into the background—, Viṣṇu again recovered his original importance.

It would thus be seen that Sūrya is perhaps the only god in the Vedas who can be regarded as a genuine solar divinity. Some of the important solar myths in the Vedas have their origin in the exuberant fancy and imagination which the Vedic poets bring to bear on the descriptions of the phenomenon of dawn. The marriage of the sun's daughter, Sūryā, at which several gods are said to have participated in a race with a view to qualifying themselves for the bride's hand, is also graphically described.

Yama: The original mythological concept underlying the character of Yama seems to be that of a hermaphrodite being—neither a full-fledged god nor yet quite an ordinary human being, but a sort of god-man—who subjected himself to self-immolation for the sake of the creation of the universe and humanity.[8] At a later stage of this cosmogonic myth, the hermaphrodite was separated into a male and a female, Yama and Yamī, who came to be regarded as the first parents of humanity. Yama, as the

[7] Dandekar, 'Viṣṇu in the Veda.' *Kane Comm. Vol.* (1941), pp. 95-111.
[8] Dandekar, 'Yama in the Veda', *B. C. Law Volume*, Part I, pp. 194-209.

first man to be born, naturally was also the first to die. He founded, so to say, a colony of the dead and ruled over it as its lord. Vedic poets speak of Yama as a legendary king who by his holiness was enabled to establish a realm of immortal life and bliss, for the righteous of the olden times, to which good men of all generations have a right of entry. There, under a beautiful tree, he revels in the company of gods, entertaining kindly thoughts about the *pitṛs* (manes). Though the later mythical conception of *svarga* (heaven) seems to have been adumbrated in such Vedic references, it is interesting to note that there is, in early Vedic literature, hardly any specific allusion to hell.

The famous *Puruṣa-sūkta*[9] elaborates in detail the cosmological myth of the self-immolation of a primeval being, vaguely indicated in certain Vedic references to Yama. The Brāhmaṇa literature, wherein Prajāpati is stated to have started the process of creation, supplies another version of the myth. The existence of a certain unapparent condition, which cannot be designated either as *sat* (entity) or as *asat* (non-entity), at the beginning of the world is indicated in the mystic *Nāsadīya-sūkta*,[10] giving another Vedic cosmogonic concept. The basis of most of the Purāṇic cosmogonic legends, however, is to be found in the *Hiraṇyagarbha-sūkta*,[11] according to which, originally, there were waters everywhere and among these primeval waters there arose a golden egg which eventually broke itself up into two hemispheres.

Rudra: The god of death, according to the early popular mythology, was not Yama, but Rudra, the 'red' one. He was also the god of wild communities living among mountains and forests, who were generally given to uncivil activities. When such a god had to be admitted to the hieratic pantheon, as in the case of Viṣṇu, an attempt was made to suppress the original character of Rudra and superimpose upon him the character of some heavenly god. In both the cases, however, in spite of such tendentious attempts on the part of the Vedic poets and priests, there do exist in Vedic literature and ritual, certain indications which unmistakably betray the original personalities of these two gods. Like Viṣṇu, Rudra also emerges in later Hindu mythology as a god of great importance and popularity, assimilating to himself, during this process, certain elements of the character of Paśupati of the Indus religion and of the Dravidian Śiva.

Gandharvas and *Apsarases*: In Vedic literature, the mythology relating to semi-divine beings, like the *gandharvas* and the *apsarases*, is not very much developed. From a rather obscure dialogue-hymn in the

[9] *Ṛ.V.*, X. 90. [10] *Ibid.*, X. 129. [11] *Ibid.*, X. 121.

Rg-Veda,[12] we know how Urvaśī, the divine nymph, having been united with Purūravas, the human king, and after living with him for four autumns, left him suddenly on his violating the stipulated conditions of their union, and how Purūravas made futile entreaties to her to return to him. Several versions of this legend occur in the later Vedic and Purāṇic literature.[13] Though it is usual to see in the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī some aspect of the solar phenomenon, it seems more likely that its underlying concept is that of a ritualistic function, namely, the production of the sacrificial fire by means of the two fire-sticks, the *uttara-araṇi* and the *adhara-araṇi*.

Mythical Sages: In connection with the exploits of the Vedic gods, or sometimes even independently, Vedic literature mentions several mythical sages like Manu, Aṅgiras, and Bhṛgu. Some of the traditionally recognized authors of the Vedic hymns also figure in many legends, partly mythical and partly historical. In the hymns called the *dānastutis*, for instance, Vedic poets have eulogized the charities of several kings and patrons of the Vedic Age. By far the most important historical event, however, which has been responsible for the growth of a large number of legends is the famous battle of the ten kings. This was a battle fought by the Aryan tribes among themselves. The earlier Aryan colonizers, led by ten kings, resisted—though unsuccessfully—the ambitious onward march of the fresh tribes of Aryan immigrants, the Bharatas and the Tṛtsus, led by Sudās. More prominently than the warlike activities of the fighting forces, however, the Vedic poets speak of the priestcraft of the rival *purohitas*, Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra ; the superior priestcraft ultimately proved to be the deciding factor in the battle.

VEDIC RELIGION

Vedic religion is, broadly speaking, polytheistic, and therefore affords ample scope for an exuberant growth of myths and legends. Further, like every polytheistic religion, it is conspicuously tolerant in attitude. This fact has resulted in the assimilation by it of varied mythological trends. There are, in Vedic religion, also clear traces of animism, which however has not proved very fruitful from the mythological point of view. It only indicates that Vedic religion was tending towards a sort of pantheism, and was thus gradually becoming spiritual in character. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that Vedic religion shows hardly any traces of idolatry.

The more or less comprehensive statement of the early Vedic mytho-

[12] X. 95.

[13] *Śat. Br.*, XI. 5. 1 ; *Ka. U.*, 8. 10 ; *Mbh.*, I. 75. 15 ff ; *Hv.*, 1363 ff ; *Viṣṇu*, IV. 6. 19 ff ; *Mat.*, 24.

logy, attempted above, will now help us to understand the later Brāhmaṇic and Hindu mythological concepts in their proper perspective. For the latter represent either a reaction against, or an embellished growth out of, the former. Of course, this evolution presupposes several factors in the cultural history of ancient India, such as the clash of cultures, the fusion of races, and the consequent process of assimilation, modification, and rejection.

MYTHOLOGY IN THE BRAHMAṆAS AND UPANIṢADS

All mythological concepts in the period of the Brāhmaṇas were made subservient to the concept of sacrifice, which was then regarded as an end in itself. While the injunctive part (*vidhi*) of a Brāhmaṇa text concerns itself with the details regarding the theory and practice of different sacrifices, the eulogistic part (*arthavāda*) is essentially devoted to their glorification through the agencies of etymology, *bandhutā* or mystic bonds, and illustrative legends. Mythical wars between gods and demons serve as the background for a large number of these illustrative legends. It is only through the efficacy of sacrifices that gods are said to have attained to godhead and overpowered demons. The Brāhmaṇas raise the sacrifice to the position of the omnipotent world-principle, and employ several mythical legends with sacrifice as the central theme, to illustrate their cosmogonical, ethical, eschatological, and other teachings. Prajāpati's continuous process of sacrifice is said to be responsible for the creation of the world. Even the legend of Manu and the deluge, which is essentially cosmogonic in character, has been employed in the Brāhmaṇas mainly to glorify the sacrificial oblation called *iḍā*.[14] The essential elements of many of the Brāhmaṇic legends seem to have been derived from the floating literary tradition of the *sūtas*, which must have been as old as—if not older than—the literary tradition preserved in the Vedas. At the same time, not a few of these legends, like those of Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa,[15] can be said to have, as their basis, actual historical and biographical episodes. The *pāriplavas* and the *narāśaṁsīs*, narrated at some sacrifices, like the *aśvamedha* and the *rājasūya*, belong principally to this class of legends.

Likewise, in the Upaniṣads, the main teachings are generally presented on the background of some narratives which tell us about the doings of gods, or their relation to human worshippers, or the incidents in the lives of different sages, thinkers, and teachers. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, for instance, teaches us the true nature of the Ātman through the narrative of Indra and Virocana, who approach Prajāpati for obtaining true knowledge

[14] *Śat. Br.*, I. 8. 1.

[15] *Ai. Br.*, VII. 13-18.

of the self, where it is shown how Virocana was satisfied just by the first instalment of Prajāpati's teaching, while Indra persisted, finally realized the true nature of the Ātman, and became all-victorious.[16] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* tells us of the various incidents in the life of the great Yājña-valkya—of his philosophical bouts in the assembly of King Janaka,[17] and of his intention to divide his property, between his two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī.[18] The Upaniṣadic teachers were very fond of parables and myths, by means of which they tried to represent allegorically the various philosophical truths. Such myths are often employed to convey a moral lesson, or to illustrate aetiological or transcendental concepts. On the whole, the mythological element in the Upaniṣads is thus made entirely subservient to philosophical teaching.

The freedom afforded by the early Vedic works in religious matters was curtailed in the Brāhmaṇa period by the priestly class by developing a very elaborate and complicated system of Vedic ritual which tended to restrict the religion of the period to these professional priests of the time and their rich patrons. It being impossible for a common man either to master the increasingly complicated technique of the Vedic sacrifice, or to make the elaborate preparations necessary for its performance, he gradually became estranged from this religion of the favoured few. This growing discontent with Brāhmaṇic ritual and all its implications were also shared by the truly intellectual class, which was opposed to the attitude of blind acceptance encouraged by the priest and the exaggerated emphasis laid on the form rather than on the spirit. The absolutistic speculations of the Upaniṣads, which partly arose out of that discontent, satisfied the spiritual urge of the intellectuals in some measure. But owing to their peculiar characteristics—such as the high intellectual level and rigorous spiritual discipline demanded by them, their essentially individualistic attitude, their apparent lack of uniform and consistent doctrine, their mysticism, and their preaching about the futility of the worldly existence—the Upaniṣads also failed to appeal to the common man.

Unlike the early Vedic religion, which was characterized by assimilative tendencies and mythological richness, neither the Brāhmaṇic ritualism nor the Upaniṣadic spiritualism could, therefore, become a popular religion in the true sense of the word. A religion, in order that it may become popular, needs a simple and uniform spiritual doctrine, a good deal of mythology, certain easy practices of worship, and a sort of generally elastic attitude. The failure of the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads in this respect naturally resulted in an indirect encouragement to the non-Vedic religious thought,

[16] *Chā. U.*, VIII. 7-12. [17] *Bṛ. U.*, III. 1-6. [18] *Ibid.*, IV. 5. 1.

which was becoming gradually, but surely, predominant in several ways. Taking advantage of the favourable conditions already created by the Upaniṣads through their non-acceptance of the absolute validity of the Vedas, non-Vedic religious systems such as Buddhism and Jainism quickly spread. They adopted from Vedic mythology, Brāhmaṇic ritualism and Upaniṣadic spiritualism—though in a different form—whatever was beneficial to them. At the same time, they scrupulously steered clear of the weak points of the latter.

POST-UPANIṢADIC PERIOD: POPULAR HINDU MYTHOLOGY

By the side of these openly non-Vedic religious movements, which claimed large popular following, there arose other popular religious movements also, which still owed allegiance, though in a distant manner, to the Vedas. These latter, however, could not make any headway before the non-Vedic religions exhausted their initial urge and enthusiasm. It is not necessary here to go into the historical causes of the failure of the non-Vedic religious movements to achieve what they had, in their initial stages, showed great promise to achieve. Attention may be drawn only to the fact that, in the days of the decline of these non-Vedic religious movements, a powerful upsurge of popular religious sentiment arose from among the masses, who had not altogether alienated themselves from their Vedic heritage. This popular Hinduism represented a revolt not so much against Vedicism as such, as against its hieratic form as well as its phase known as Brāhmaṇism.

KṚṢṆA RELIGION

One current of this popular religious movement, which, it may be incidentally pointed out, proved to be, in course of time, a very fertile source of Indian mythology, started among the various communities of Western and Central India, such as the Vṛṣṇis, the Sātvatas, and the Yādavas. Historically it may be presumed that Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, who was a leader of the Vṛṣṇis and of the other tribes dependent on the Vṛṣṇis, undertook to reorganize the entire religious thought and practices so that they should command truly popular response, without, however, alienating them from the ancient Vedic heritage. The main features of this new religious enterprise may be briefly stated as follows: the principal gods of the Vedic pantheon, like Indra and Varuṇa, were superseded by new popular gods; the simple doctrine of *bhakti* took the place of the complicated Vedic ritual; a greater emphasis was put on ethical teachings than on metaphysical speculations; a life of activism was specifically recommended as against renunciation; *loka-saṁgraha* or social solidarity rather than individual

emancipation was recognized as the goal of spiritual life; and synthesis rather than scholastic dogmatism was made the watchword of progress in the field of knowledge. In the personality of Kṛṣṇa, this religious movement secured the advantage of a very effective leadership. For Kṛṣṇa, who was a tribal leader, soon became a tribal 'hero' and then a tribal 'god'. Several mythological legends came to be woven round his personality, thus making him a god of exceedingly complex character.

The pastoral aspect of the Kṛṣṇa-religion was celebrated in the charming tales of Kṛṣṇa's boyhood spent in the company of the *gopālas* (cowherds), while the erotic-devotional aspect was represented through the fascinating legends of his association with Rādhā and other *gopīs* (milkmaids). According to one legend, by lifting up the Govardhana hill, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa is said to have given to the entire community of cowherds protective shelter against the wrath of Indra, who would flood their settlements and thus ruin their communal festival. This legend clearly indicates that Kṛṣṇa was now coming into ascendency as against Indra, who had dominated the hieratic Vedic mythology. It is further interesting to note how, by means of an ingenious mythological device, the heroic Kṛṣṇa, born in the family of the Vṛṣṇis, was brought into close contact with the pastoral communities. Vasudeva of the Vṛṣṇis, who with his wife, Devakī, was prisoner of Kaṁsa of Mathurā, and whose children were being killed by the latter, lest one of them should one day overpower him, is represented to have stealthily carried his eighth child, Kṛṣṇa, immediately after birth, to his friend, Nanda, the cowherd king, and entrusted him to his care and protection. There, in the house of Nanda, Kṛṣṇa was brought up as a cowherd boy until, later, he was called upon to put down the atrocities of Kaṁsa.

The rise of the Kṛṣṇa religion synchronizes with that period in the literary history of ancient India, in which the floating literary tradition of the *sūtas* was being given a fixed literary form with the historical poem about the Bhārata war as the nucleus. The sponsors of the Kṛṣṇa-religion took advantage of this early form of the great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, and employed it as an effective vehicle for the propagation of their teachings. A revision of the epic was consequently brought about by introducing into it the character of Kṛṣṇa, who was represented as a relative, guide, friend, and philosopher of the Pāṇḍavas in general and of Arjuna in particular. Bhagavat Kṛṣṇa eventually became almost the central figure in the epic, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the epitome of the teachings of the Kṛṣṇa-religion, came to be regarded as its very quintessence. This combination of a religious movement and an epic tradition resulted in an exuberant growth of mythological legends spread all over the *Mahābhārata*.

THE BRAHMANIC REDACTION OF THE MAHABHARATA

The Brāhmaṇic redaction, which the *Mahābhārata* underwent during its final stages, did not interfere with Kṛṣṇa's essential part in the epic. All the same, they began to regard Kṛṣṇa as just an *avatāra* of the All-god Viṣṇu, and thus tried to assimilate the Kṛṣṇa religion with Vaiṣṇavism, which had arisen in the meanwhile, and through the latter, with the ancient Vedic religious tradition. The mention of Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra, in one of the Upaniṣads, as a pupil of the Brāhmaṇic teacher, Ghora Āṅgirasa,[19] also seems to have been an attempt in the above direction.

In the meantime, two other important forms of popular religion, one with Viṣṇu as the presiding deity and another with Śiva, had made their appearance, originating presumably among the pastoral and agricultural communities and among the wild tribes living in the mountains and forests respectively. Though starting initially on the basis of Viṣṇu and Rudra, two minor Vedic deities, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism almost completely superseded in course of time whatever had remained of the ancient Vedic religion, and eventually established themselves as the most representative forms of Hinduism. But they could not resist the hieratic influence very long. Owing to the fact that Viṣṇu and Śiva could be traced back to the Veda, the Brāhmaṇas found it easy, and also advisable, to adopt these religions, particularly Vaiṣṇavism, as their own. A very significant indication of this hieratic tendency is the elevation of Viṣṇu to the position of the All-god—the most important member of the Hindu Triad.

TRIMŪRTI

The beginnings of the concept of the triple divinity may be traced back to the concept of dual divinity in Vedic mythology. As a matter of fact, in Vedic mythology, the three gods, Agni, Vāyu, and Sūrya, were actually so very closely associated with one another as to form almost one single divine personality. The trinity of the later Hinduism consists of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The last two gods were the presiding divinities of the two prominent forms of popular Hinduism, namely, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, while the concept of Brahmā seems to have been evolved out of the concept of Prajāpati of the earlier Brāhmaṇic literature. The Hindu Triad thus represents an attempt to bring about a religious synthesis between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism on the one hand, and between these two popular religious movements and Brāhmaṇism on the other. With their usual fondness for schematizing, the Brāhmaṇas regarded Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva as the representations of the creative, preservative, and destructive

[19] *Chā. U.*, III. 17. 6.

principles and as the embodiments of the *guṇas, rajas, sattva,* and *tamas,* respectively. The Purāṇas have given various legends pertaining to the trinity. Though they generally assert that the three gods are to be comprehended within but one supreme Being, and therefore adjure the pious to make no difference among them, it may be pointed out that Viṣṇu often carries off the palm of supremacy. Whenever the world is overwhelmed with evil, Viṣṇu is represented to have rescued it from utter extinction in his differnt incarnations or *avatāras.*

AVATĀRA

Faint traces of the concept of *avatāra* may be discovered in the Vedic idea of Viṣṇu, as a solar divinity, coming down to the earth from his highest abode, and also in the frequent allusions, in Vedic literature, to the fact that gods assumed different forms in order to accomplish their several exploits. In the Vedic literature we actually come across the early indications of the later dwarf-incarnation, the boar-incarnation, the tortoise-incarnation, and the fish-incarnation.[20] The concept of *avatāra* has indeed proved one of the most fruitful sources of Hindu mythology. The Purāṇas and the Upapurāṇas give various myths and legends relating to the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. The circumstances which necessitated these *avatāras* and the mighty deeds accomplished by Viṣṇu on those occasions are most graphically and exhaustively described. Attempts have been made to rationalize the different forms assumed by Viṣṇu in his different incarnations. It is, for instance, suggested that in the beginning there were waters everywhere, and, to suit this condition of the world, the first incarnation of Viṣṇu was, appropriately enough, in the form of a fish. Then the earth began gradually to take shape among those waters, and therefore in his second incarnation, Viṣṇu appeared as a tortoise, which can move with ease both in water and on land. The later stages of evolution—namely, animal life in the forests, the life of wild humanity, the meagrely developed condition of human civilization, the condition of the warring cave-man, the development of family-life and domestic virtues, and the growth of complex social and political relations—are said to have been symbolically represented respectively by *Varāha* (boar), *Narasiṁha* (man-lion), *Vāmana* (dwarf), *Paraśurāma* (axe-man), Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa. It appears that certain Purāṇas are specifically devoted to the descriptions of certain *avatāras* of Viṣṇu.[21] The seventh *avatāra* has indeed become the central theme of Vālmīki's beautiful epic poem, the *Rāmāyaṇa.* As in the case of Kṛṣṇa,

[20] See 'Viṣṇu in the Veda'. Traces of tortoise-incarnation and fish-incarnation are found in *Śat. Br.*

[21] Cf. the names *Matsya P., Varāha P., Kūrma P.,* etc.

here too, Rāma, who seems to have been a historical prince of a petty State in Eastern India, and, perhaps, also a tribal 'hero', has been elevated to the position of a god and an incarnation of Viṣṇu. It may be presumed that Vālmīki has derived the material for his epic poem from three main sources namely, the court-intrigue in respect of Rāma, the prince of Ayodhyā; the symbolically represented history of the Aryan expansion to the East and to the South; and an ancient agricultural myth.

YUGA AND MANVANTARA

A mythological concept, which is closely related to the *avatāra*-theory, is that of the *yugas* or the ages of the world. The *yugas* are four in number. In the first *yuga*, called '*kṛta*, whose duration is computed to be 4,800 years of gods (each year of gods being equal to 360 years of men), there is perfect and eternal righteousness, and the *dharma* is said to be standing on all its four feet. In the next three *yugas*, viz. *tretā*, *dvāpara*, and *kali*, consisting respectively of 3,600, 2,400, and 1,200 years of gods, *dharma* gradually decreases by one-fourth, remaining to the extent of only one-fourth in the *kaliyuga*. These four *yugas* together make a *mahāyuga* or a *manvantara*, and 2,000 such *mahāyugas* make a *kalpa*. The cycle of the creation, destruction, and re-creation of the world goes on eternally. This concept is indeed given a very prominent place among the five distinguishing topics dealt with by the Purāṇas.

FEMALE DIVINITIES

The rise of female divinities, partly due to the influence of the Dravidian folk-religion, is a significant feature of popular Hindu mythology, distinguishing it from the early Vedic and Brāhmaṇic mythologies. '*Lakṣmī*,' occurring in the early Vedic literature in the sense of good fortune, came to be regarded as the goddess of fortune and the wife of Viṣṇu during the obscure period prior to the revival of Vedicism in the form of popular Hinduism, and became Sītā and Rukmiṇī during Viṣṇu's incarnation as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively. Similarly, the Vedic river-divinity Sarasvatī is later elevated to the position of the goddess of speech and learning and is schematically associated with Brahmā as his wife. But it is mainly the consort of Śiva who, in her several forms, plays the most prominent role in popular mythology. She is often glorified as Śakti, or the female energy of Śiva, and, as such, has two characters, one mild and the other fierce. In her milder form, she is celebrated as Umā (bright), who, incidentally, can be traced to the later Vedic literature,[22] and Gaurī. But it is her terrible

[22] *Ke. U.*, 25.

form that is more distinctive. It may be presumed that the worship of Śakti, the fierce goddess, existed as an independent religious cult among certain wild tribes, and that it was only at a later stage that it was brought into close contact with the Śiva-worship. As a matter of fact, by the side of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, Śāktism also commanded a large following. Bloody sacrifices and sexual orgies of the Tāntrikas are some of the distinctive features of the Śakti-worship. As a destroyer of many *asuras* and an accomplisher of mighty deeds, Śakti, in the form of Kālī or Cāmuṇḍī, plays almost the same role as the Vedic Indra. Appropriately enough, an entire Purāṇa, the *Devī-bhāgavata*, which is by some placed among the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas, is devoted to the celebration of the various exploits of the great goddess. Similarly, the poem *Devī-māhātmya*, consisting of 700 stanzas, enumerates her victories over the various demons.

In popular Hinduism the gods who were prominent in Vedic mythology were not altogether banished from the pantheon, but were relegated to subordinate positions. Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, and Soma were regarded as *lokapālas* or guardians of the quarters. Indra, as the king of gods, continued to rule in the *svarga*, but as dependent on the All-god Viṣṇu. The conception of *svarga*, which was considered as the abode of minor gods and beatified mortals, and yielding many forms of enjoyment, such as draughts of *amṛta* (nectar), the music of the *gandharvas*, and the company of *apsarases*, would appear to be just a very much elaborated form of the Vedic Yama's abode of bliss. Apart from the *svarga*, Viṣṇu has his special abode in Vaikuṇṭha and Śiva that in Kailāsa. As a counterpart of the *svarga*, the idea of *naraka* or hell came to be specifically developed in the popular Hindu mythology. It is generally a place of torture to which the souls of the wicked are sent. The Purāṇas enumerate as many as twenty-one hells and indulge in graphic and gruesome descriptions of them.

MYTHOLOGY OF POPULAR HINDUISM

The mythology of popular Hinduism has always tended to become richer and richer, as time passed, on account of the addition of legends pertaining, on the one hand, to the victories of the numerous gods, goddesses, and godlings over the various *rākṣasas* or Titans of Hindu mythology, and, on the other, to their acts of grace in respect of their devotees and worshippers. There was further added to Hinduism an ever-increasing mass of mythological details, whose origin can be traced to various minor cults, such as the serpent-worship and the worship of *graha-devatās* (planetary deities) and *grāma-devatās* (village deities). Again, we must not forget the large number of legends occasioned by the remarkably ingenious manner in which the characters of certain ancient sages, like

Nārada, have been developed by the fertile mythological imagination of Hindu poets, bards, and minstrels. Philosophy is often described as the foundation of religion, ritual as its superstructure, and mythology as its detailed decoration. In the case of Hinduism, however, mythology is not merely its decoration; it is its essential constituent factor. Mythology is at once the strength and weakness of Hinduism—strength, because mythology represents some of the distinctive features of Hinduism, such a toleration, broad sympathy, liberal outlook, and dynamically assimilative and, at the same time, elevating power; and weakness, because there is the danger of the true spirit of Hinduism being undermined by the weight of its mythological richness.

16

THE PURĀṆAS

MEANING OF THE WORD 'PURĀṆA'; WORKS NOW KNOWN AS MAHĀPURĀṆAS

THE word '*purāṇa*' originally means 'ancient' or 'old narrative'; but long before the beginning of the Christian era it came also to be used as the designation of a class of books dealing, among other matters, with old-world stories and legends. As the extensive Purāṇa literature handed down to posterity included both early and late as well as major and minor works, the distinguishing class name 'Mahāpurāṇa' was given in comparatively late days[1] to those particular major Purāṇas which commanded the highest respect of the people for their age and importance.

At present we have got eighteen works known as Mahāpurāṇas, and all of them have been printed more than once.[2] The names of these works are: (1) *Vāyu Purāṇa*, (2) *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, (3) *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, (4) *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, (5) *Matsya Purāṇa*, (6) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, (7) *Kūrma Purāṇa*, (8) *Vāmana Purāṇa*, (9) *Liṅga Purāṇa*, (10) *Varāha Purāṇa*, (11) *Padma Purāṇa*, (12) *Nāradīya Purāṇa*, (13) *Agni Purāṇa*, (14) *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, (15) *Brahma Purāṇa*, (16) *Skanda Purāṇa*, (17) *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, and (18) *Bhaviṣya* or *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa*. Most of these works are of comparatively late origin, and not a single Purāṇa claims to have come down in its original form. Besides these eighteen *mahat*, or principal Purāṇas, there are a number of works which style themselves 'Purāṇa' or 'Upapurāṇa' (secondary Purāṇa), dealt with in the next chapter.

ORIGIN, ANTIQUITY, AND EARLY CHARACTER OF THE PURĀṆAS

It is difficult to say definitely how and when the Purāṇas first came into being, though their claim to great antiquity, next only to that of the Vedas, cannot be denied. It is mentioned mostly in connection with

[1] The name 'Mahāpurāṇa' is of late origin. It is found only in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, XII. 7. 10 and 22 and *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, IV. 131. 7 and 10. What are now known as Mahāpurāṇas, are called simply Purāṇas in the earlier works.

[2] In this chapter, the following editions of the Purāṇas have been used:

Vāyu, *Matsya*, *Padma*, *Agni*, and *Brahma Purāṇa*—Ed. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona.

Brahmāṇḍa, *Kūrma*, *Vāmana*, *Nāradīya*, *Skanda*, and *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*—Ed. Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay.

Mārkaṇḍeya, *Viṣṇu*, *Liṅga*, and *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*—Ed. Jīvānanda Vidyāsāgara, Calcutta.

Bhāgavata and *Garuḍa Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta

Varāha Purāṇa—Ed. Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1893.

itihāsa, in the *Atharva-Veda*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, and a few other works of the Vedic literature. The *Atharva-Veda*,[3] which contains the earliest mention of the word '*purāṇa*', says that the *ṛcs* (verses), the *sāmans* (songs), the metres, and the *purāṇa*, originated from the residue (*ucchiṣṭa*) of the sacrifice together with the *yajus* (sacrificial formulae). The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[4] on the other hand, ascribes the origin of the four Vedas, *itihāsa*, *purāṇa*, etc. to the breath of the Mahābhūta (the 'Great Being', Paramātman, the Supreme Soul). These traditions, though somewhat different, are unanimous in recognizing the sacred origin of the Purāṇa as also in giving it a status almost equal to that of the Vedas. As a matter of fact, in some of the works of the Vedic and the early Buddhist literature, the Purāṇa has been called the fifth Veda. The way in which the Purāṇa has been connected with sacrifice as well as with the *yajus* in the *Atharva-Veda*, the theory of the origin of the universe from sacrifice as expounded in the *Puruṣa-sūkta* of the *Ṛg-Veda*, and the topics constituting the *pāriplava ākhyānas* or recurring narrations in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice, tend to indicate that the Purāṇa, as a branch of learning, had its beginning in the Vedic period and originated in the narrative portion (*ākhyāna-bhāga*) of the Vedic sacrifice, which, in the Brāhmaṇas, is repeatedly identified with the God Prajāpati, the precursor of the later Brahmā, the creator. In the extant Purāṇas, however, there is a verse which tells us that at the beginning of creation, Brahmā had remembered the Purāṇa first of all the scriptures, before the Vedas came out of his mouth.[5] This statement, however absurd it may appear to be, will have validity, if we take the word '*purāṇa*' to mean not the Purāṇa literature, but 'ancient stories and legends', which, in every country, come into being much earlier than versified compositions. That the Purāṇic tradition can rightly claim a much earlier beginning than the Vedas, is also shown by the fact that kings Vadhryaśva, Divodāsa, Sudās, Somaka, and others, who are known to the *Ṛg-Veda*, have been placed very low in the genealogical lists given in the Purāṇas.

Extreme paucity of information leaves us in absolute darkness as to the character and contents of the ancient Purāṇic works, none of which has come down to us in its original form. The famous Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakoṣa* (*c.* sixth century A.D.) contains an old definition, repeated in many of the extant Purāṇas, which says that a Purāṇa is to deal with the following five characteristic topics: (1) *Sarga* (creation, or evolution of the universe from its natural cause), (2) *pratisarga* (recreation of the world from

[3] XI. 7. 24.
[4] II. 4. 10.
[5] *Vāyu Purāṇa*, I. 60-61; *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, I. 1. 40-41; *Matsya Purāṇa*, III. 3-4, LIII. 3. See also *Brahma Purāṇa*, CLXI. 27-28; *Padma Purāṇa*, V. 1. 45-57.

its constituent elements, in which it is merged at the close of each aeon—*kalpa*—or day in the life of Brahmā, the creator), (3) *vaṁśa* (genealogies of gods, demons, patriarchs, sages and kings, especially of the last two), (4) *manvantara* (cosmic cycles, each of which is ruled over by a Manu, the first father of mankind), and (5) *vaṁśānucarita* (accounts of royal dynasties). The root of all these characteristics can be traced to the *ākhyānas* (tales), *upākhyānas* (anecdotes), *gāthās* (metrical songs or proverbial sayings current in ancient society), and *kalpoktis* (sayings that had come down through ages), which, the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇas* say, were utilized by the ancient sage Vyāsa in compiling the original Purāṇa Saṁhitā. These characteristics, therefore, seem to indicate, at least partially, the nature of the ancient Purāṇas in their early, if not their original, forms; and these are in perfect conformity with the connection of the Purāṇas with sacrifice, from which, the *Ṛg-Veda* says, the universe originated.

Some scholars have expressed the view that the traditional lore out of which the Purāṇas have been fashioned was of Kṣatriya, not of Brāhmaṇa, origin. Their main argument in favour of this view is that Lomaharṣaṇa, who is the narrator in almost all the extant Purāṇas, is called a *sūta* i.e. one born of a Kṣatriya father and a Brāhmaṇa mother and following the profession of a bard in royal courts, as the Smṛtis, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Purāṇas tell us. But this view is open to serious objections, which are stated below: All the extant Purāṇas are unanimous in declaring that Lomaharṣaṇa was a mere transmitter of the Purāṇic traditions learnt from Vyāsa and could have nothing to do with the origin of the Purāṇas. Even Vyāsa himself was not the author, but a mere compiler of the original Purāṇa Saṁhitā. Now the question is: who were the creators and transmitters of the material used by Vyāsa? A study of the Brāhmaṇa literature will show that in the performance of a Vedic sacrifice, *purāṇas* (old stories and legends, including those concerning creation), *ākhyānas*, and *upākhyānas*, were often narrated and *gāthās* recited; and it was the Brāhmaṇa priests who did these narrations and recitations. According to the *Bṛhad-devatā*, the recitation of the history of the *mantras* (Vedic verses) was an inseparable part of the Vedic sacrifice and the knowledge of the *purāṇa*, or the origin of the *mantra*, was one of the essential functions of the Vedic priests. There can be little doubt about the fact that many of the *purāṇas*, *ākhyānas*, etc., contained in the Brāhmaṇa texts, were inherited by the Vedic priests from their ancient ancestors, but the Brāhmaṇa texts themselves give ample evidence to show that new myths and legends were often invented for satisfactorily explaining some sacrificial ceremony or other. Even as regards the genealogies (*vaṁśa*) of sages, the priests appear to have preserved traditions, some of which are found recorded in the *Śatapatha*

Brāhmaṇa of the *Yajur-Veda* and the *Vaṁśa Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāma-Veda*. The praise of the liberality of former princes, found in the *Aitareya* and other Brāhmaṇas, especially during the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha* sacrifices, presupposes the priests' knowledge of the genealogies and activities of kings. It is highly probable, therefore, that the priests gave much attention to these things also. That the Brāhmaṇas of olden times concerned themselves with the genealogies and accounts of kings is evidenced by some of the extant Purāṇas, of which the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, and *Matsya*, speak of *anuvaṁśa-ślokas* (verses concerning genealogies of kings) sung by ancient (*purātana*) Brāhmaṇas.[6] But it is interesting to note that although the *sūta* has been mentioned in many of the Vedic Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas, he has not been connected in any way with the work of narrating, preserving, or inventing the *purāṇas*, *ākhyānas*, etc., which constituted the earliest Purāṇic works. On the other hand, the *sūta* has been mentioned as an important figure among the state officials. According to the *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa*, he is one of the eight *vīras* (brave people constituting the king's supporters and *entourage*); in some Vedic texts he is reckoned as one of the eleven jewels (*ratna*, *ratnin*) of the king; and in the *Atharva-Veda* and the *Śatarudrīya* section of the *Yajur-Veda* he is one of the king-makers (*rāja-kṛt*). In respect of power and position, he is next to the king's brother, equal to the *sthapati* (governor or chief judge), and superior to the *grāmaṇī* (village headman).[7] The words *'ahanti'*, *'ahantya'*, and *'ahantva'*,[8] as applied to him in the *Śatarudrīya*, seem to denote his sacred character. But this exalted position the *sūta* could not maintain in later days. Vedic, epic, and Sanskrit literature testify to a gradual deterioration in the position of the *sūta*, whose vocation also must have changed in later days with the gradual lowering of his position.[9] So the statements about the duties and position of the *sūta* in the extant Purāṇas (which are comparatively late works) should not be used to connect him with the origin of the Purāṇas. The *Atharva-Veda* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* believed in the sacred origin of the Purāṇa and gave it a position almost equal to that of the Vedas. This sacred character of the Purāṇic lore indicated by later Vedic literature seems to be in disagreement with the position of the *sūta* in the extant

[6] *Vāyu Purāṇa*, LXXXVIII. 67-68; XCVI. 13; XCIX. 278 *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, III. 63. 69; 71. 74. *Matsya Purāṇa*, L. 88; CCLXXI. 15-16.

[7] See, for instance, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V. 4. 4. 15-19.

[8] These words seem to be equivalent to the word *'hanya'* not to be killed.

[9] F. E. Pargiter cites the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra and* other works in order to distinguish between the two *sūtas*—one being the narrator of the Purāṇas and the other born of the Kṣatriya father and the Brāhmaṇī mother. As a matter of fact, the degraded Vedic *sūta* and the Paurāṇika *sūta* (who was originally a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya) were brought together by their common profession in comparatively late days to form one mixed caste into which other people following the same profession must have been absorbed in later days.

Purāṇas, in which he is described as one born in the reverse order of castes from a Kṣatriya father and a Brāhmaṇī mother. The story of his origin from King Pṛthu's horse sacrifice, as contained in the *Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa,* and several other Purāṇas, however, indicates that, before forming a distinct class or caste by themselves, the Paurāṇika *sūtas* came of the Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya castes of the Vedic Age; and the five traditional characteristics of the early Purāṇas were determined principally, if not entirely, by the *pāriplava ākhyānas* of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.

It is not possible to say how and when the Purāṇa texts of the Vedic times passed into the hands of the *sūtas* mentioned in the extant Purāṇas. It may be that with the extinction of the *pāriplava* as a constituent rite of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice after the Sūtra period, the Purāṇa texts of the Vedic Brāhmaṇas became a property of the *sūtas* and began to be mixed up with the popular conceptions of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and other deities, and the *sūtas,* who, in the meantime, had sunk into the position of bards, took up this new form of Purāṇic lore in right earnest to popularize the Vedic ideas as well as to earn their livelihood and improve their position in the public eye. As the Purāṇic lore of post-Vedic times got mixed up with popular ideas, it lost much of its previous sacredness, and the *sūtas,* who became the bearers of this new lore, were considered unfit for studying the Vedas. It is, however, quite possible that there were independent Kṣatriya traditions regarding the genealogies and accounts of kings who reigned in ancient times, and that the *sūtas,* who might have already become the custodians of these traditions, utilized them fully in the Purāṇic lore which they so zealously advocated.

Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇas* state that after compiling the original Purāṇa Saṁhitā, Vyāsa imparted it to his disciple Sūta Lomaharṣaṇa, who, in his turn, made it into six versions and taught them to his six Brāhmaṇa disciples, and that three of them, namely Kāśyapa, Sāvarṇi, and Śāṁsapāyana, made three separate Saṁhitās, which were called after their names, and which, together with Lomaharṣaṇa's one, were the four root compilations (*mūla saṁhitā*) from which the Purāṇas of later days were derived. This theory of the existence of one original Purāṇa, supported by scholars like A.M.T. Jackson, A. Blau, and F.E. Pargiter, but disapproved by others, seems to point to the earliest time when there was no more than a single Vedic school. Consequently, in its beginning, the Purāṇic heritage also was the same as that of the Vedic. But with the progress of time the same Purāṇic heritage was remodelled and diversified with changes, modifications, and fresh additions of materials, in different families, and thus arose the different Purāṇa Saṁhitās. It is most probably for this reason

that numerous verses on the five characteristic topics of the Purāṇas are found common to almost all the extant Purāṇas.

The forms of these Purāṇa Saṁhitās, unlike those of the Vedas, could never be fixed; because, with the progress of time there were changes in the ideas and beliefs, in the modes of living and thinking, and in the environments of the different groups of people, and accordingly they also were recast and adapted to new requirements. This unstable character of the Purāṇic texts seems to have been hinted at by the extant Purāṇas themselves, of which the *Matsya Purāṇa*[10] says that when, in course of time, the Purāṇa was no longer accepted by the people, Lord Viṣṇu took the form of Vyāsa and re-edited it in every *yuga*. So we see that the Purāṇa literature has really been from time immemorial an invaluable record of the history and mythology of an ancient race.

RISE OF THE PRESENT EIGHTEEN PURĀṆAS

Although we are in absolute darkness as to when the original Purāṇic heritage began to give rise to different Purāṇa Saṁhitās, it can hardly be denied that more Purāṇas than one had come into existence long before the beginning of the Christian era. In the Law-books of Manu and Yājñavalkya and in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* the word '*purāṇa*' has been used in the plural number; the *Mahābhārata*[11] speaks of a *purāṇa* proclaimed by Vāyu (Wind-god); and the *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra* cites three passages from an unspecified Purāṇa and one passage from a *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*. The self-contradicting title '*Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa*' (lit. the Purāṇa on future ages), given to a distinct work of the Purāṇa literature, indicates that in Āpastamba's time the term '*purāṇa*' had become so thoroughly specialized as to have lost its proper meaning, and had become merely the designation of a particular class of books. It would have required the existence of a number of Purāṇas to produce that change, and manifestly they must have had their own special names to distinguish from one another, and so convert their common title Purāṇa into a class designation. Hence we can reasonably hold that the number of the Purāṇas began to be multiplied long before the time of Āpastamba, who is dated between 600 and 300 B.C.

It is not known how many Purāṇas were already there in Āpastamba's time and how they went on growing in number, but we find a tradition, recorded in almost all the extant Purāṇas and other works, that the Purāṇas (or rather Mahāpurāṇas) are eighteen in number. The names of these eighteen Purāṇas, as given in the different Purāṇic works, are the same as those of the works now extant under the general title Mahāpurāṇa, and

[10] LIII. 8-9.

[11] III. 191. 16 (Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta).

the order in which these works have been enumerated in the majority of the lists, is as follows: *Brahma, Padma, Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Bhāgavata, Nāradīya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Agni, Bhaviṣya, Brahmavaivarta, Liṅga, Varāha, Skanda, Vāmana, Kūrma, Matsya, Garuḍa,* and *Brahmāṇḍa.* There are, of course, a few Purāṇic works which, in their respective lists, replace the name of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* with that of the *Śiva* (or *Śaiva*) *Purāṇa,* but the latter is a much later work and is really not a Mahāpurāṇa at all.

The existence of more Purāṇas than one in Āpastamba's time or earlier does not, however, mean that the above tradition of eighteen principal Purāṇas came into vogue at such an early period. As a matter of fact, this tradition can scarcely be dated earlier than the third century A.D. There is, of course, mention of 'eighteen Purāṇas' in the *Mahābhārata*[12] and the *Harivaṁśa,*[13] but the passages referred to are in all probability later additions. Chapter CIV of the *Vāyu Purāṇa,* which contains a somewhat peculiar list of eighteen Purāṇas, is undoubtedly an interpolation; and the lists occurring in the *Viṣṇu* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* are of extremely doubtful authenticity. However, from the evidence of the Purāṇas, *Matsya, Kūrma,* and others, and other Sanskrit works, we can be sure that the tradition originated not later than the beginning of the seventh century A.D. So, by the end of the sixth century A.D. at the latest, the number of the Purāṇas composed had already been eighteen and got rigidly fixed there, because this number was regarded as a sacred one by the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains alike.

FORM AND CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT PURĀṆAS

We have seen that in early times the Purāṇas dealt with five characteristic topics. But most of the extant Mahāpurāṇas either omit some of these topics or deal with them very imperfectly, while they incorporate, on the other hand, extensive glorifications of one or more of the sectarian deities like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, add numerous chapters on new myths, and legends, and multifarious topics concerning religion and society, for instance, duties of the different castes and orders of life, sacraments, customs in general, eatables and non-eatables, duties of women, funeral rites and ceremonies, impurity on birth and death, sins, penances and expiations, purification of things, names and description of hells, results of good and bad deeds (*karma-vipāka*), pacification of unfavourable planets, donations of various types, dedication of wells, tanks, and gardens, worship, devotional vows (*vratas*), places of pilgrimage, consecration of temples and images of

[12] XVIII. 5. 46; 6. 97.
[13] *Bhaviṣyaparvan,* CXXXV. 3 (Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta).

gods, initiation, and various mystic rites and practices. This change in the character and contents of the present Mahāpurāṇas is remarkable and peculiar and requires explanation.

An investigation into the religious movements in ancient India will show that besides the Brāhmaṇical religion guided by Śruti (i.e. Veda) and Smṛti (Law-books), there were various *popular* systems which arose in different parts of the country. Some of these systems were openly antagonistic to the Brāhmaṇical ideas, i.e. Buddhism, Jainism, the doctrine preached by Maṅkhaliputta Gosāla, and the like; some had their principal deities identified from very early times with those of the Vedas, i.e. the doctrines of the Brāhmas (i.e. Brahmā-worshippers), Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas, Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavas, and Pāśupata Śaivas; and some, though originally non-Vedic, were traced into the Vedas in later times, viz. Śaktism and Gāṇapatyaism. Besides the staunch followers of these religious systems, there was another considerable class of people who were rather of a mixed type with a synthetic attitude of mind. On the one hand, they entertained high regard for the sectarian deities and looked upon their worship as the best means of attaining salvation; on the other, they believed deeply in the principles of the Sāṁkhya and Vedānta systems of philosophy (by reconciling which they explained the nature of their deities), valued much the practice of the rules of castes and orders of life, and regarded the Vedas as the highest authority in all matters. We shall see below that it is to this last-mentioned class of people that the present form and character of the Purāṇas are due.

According to the Brāhmaṇical religion, which is rooted in the Vedas, it was the Brāhmaṇas who were given the highest place in society. As they formed the intellectual class among the Aryans, they could naturally command, at least claim for themselves, the highest respect. They enjoyed more privileges than the other classes in almost every sphere of life. The Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas had prescribed duties which they were required to perform. The Śūdras were not allowed to take part in religious performances, but were only to serve the twice-born, who claimed absolute right over the earnings of their respective servants. Such a state of society continued more or less smoothly until there arose many new religious systems, some clearly protesting against the position of the Brāhmaṇa and the authority of the Vedas, and others not very favourable to the principles of orthodox Brāhmaṇism. The rise and propagation of these rival faiths proved fatal to the sacrificial religion of the Vedas, which was already on the decline. The evidence of the Vedic and Sanskrit works shows that by the time of Manu (the traditional author of the *Manu Saṁhitā*) the Śrauta rites gradually

became obsolete and the orthodox Vedic religionists were turning Smārtas (followers of Smṛtis).

Revolts against the Brāhmaṇical doctrines appear to have begun long before the time of Gautama Buddha. The *Suttanipāta* speaks of sixty-three different philosophical schools (probably all of them were non-Brāhmaṇical) existing at the time of the Buddha ; and in early Jain texts there are passages exhibiting a far larger number of such heretical doctrines. Of the teachers of these anti-Vedic religious systems, the names of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, Maṅkhaliputta Gosāla, and Gautama Buddha, are too well known to be overlooked ; these three non-Brāhmaṇical teachers believed neither in the Vedic gods nor in the Vedic *dharma* as regulated by the system of castes and orders of life ; they regarded spontaneous renunciation and practice of severe austerities and *yoga* as the best means of attaining supreme bliss. Therefore they were naturally looked upon as the most powerful opponents of Brāhmaṇism. There are inscriptional, literary, and other evidence to show that the doctrines preached by these three teachers seriously affected the followers of the Vedic religion because of their drawing the kings and commoners largely into their folds.

The followers of the *popular* systems mentioned before were highly cosmopolitan in their attitude, attached little importance to the Brāhmaṇical rules and scriptures, and laid special stress on renunciation for the practice of *yoga*. Among them there were various disciplines for people of different grades, for having an idea of them references may be made to the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* of the Pāñcarātras. In this work the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas have been divided into three groups, with further subdivisions, according to the extent of their renunciation, the nature of their attachment to the sect, and their method of worshipping Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. One of the three groups is said to have consisted of the *āptas*, *anāptas*, *ārambhins*, and *saṁpravartins*, described as follows: 'Those who do not give up the duties imposed on them by their castes, but worship the god with devotion by means of acts prescribed by the *āptas*, are called *anāptas*. The Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇa and others who, without caring for the instructions of the *āptas*, worship the Universal Soul for the attainment of the desired objects, are called *ārambhins*. O best of Brāhmaṇa, know those people as *saṁpravartins* who, out of devotion, set themselves to worship Hari in a wrong way.'[14] Among the worshippers of Brahmā, Paśupati (Śiva), and Śakti also, there must have been adherents of the types of the *anāptas*, *ārambhins*, and *saṁpravartins*. It is undoubtedly to these Smārta Brāhmaṇa adherents of the above religions that the composite (*vyāmiśra*) character of Purāṇic

[14] *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* (Ed. Gaekwaḍ's Oriental Series, Baroda), XXII. 34-37.

Hinduism and the present form of the Purāṇas were originally due, and it was they who were the authors of the present Purāṇas ; because these works, mostly characterized by the names of the sectarian deities or their chief forms, exhibit, on the one hand, the sectarian zeal in glorifying the respective deities, and, on the other, preach the authority of the Vedas and the performance of the duties of the different castes and orders of life.

The various sects and systems of religion just mentioned, created an atmosphere which did not in an orthodox way conform to Vedic or Brāhmaṇical ideas. This atmosphere was further disturbed by the advent of casteless foreigners, such as the Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kuṣāṇas, and Ābhīras, who founded extensive kingdoms and settled in this country. Though these foreigners accepted Buddhism, Śaivism, or Vaiṣṇavism, and were soon Indianized, their non-Brāhmaṇic manners and customs could not but influence the people, especially their brothers-in-faith. Most of these alien tribes being originally nomadic, they can be expected to have had a variable standard of morality which also must have affected the people living around them.

Further trouble was created for Brāhmaṇism by the political supremacy of the non-Kṣatriyas, or rather Śūdras, as the Purāṇas hold, under the Nandas, Mauryas, and probably also Āndhras. The Brāhmaṇas always emphasized the low social status of the Śūdras and reduced them to servitude. In religious life also the latter enjoyed little privilege and freedom. It is natural, therefore, that these down-trodden Śūdras revolted against the Brāhmaṇas when they had political power in their hand.

The different forces enumerated above acted simultaneously and produced a state of society which was favourable neither to the propagation of Brāhmaṇical ideas nor to the orthodox Brāhmaṇas. Accounts of this social disorder can be gathered from the extant Purāṇas and the early Buddhist literature. The similarity between the accounts given in these two sources is very great. In numerous cases, what the Purāṇas formulate, the Jātakas seem to illustrate. This striking agreement between the two accounts proves that they are not as imaginary as we may take them to be, but have some historical value. These accounts testify to a serious disintegration of the social fabric, with the result that people became regardless of the Vedic system, and there was a remarkable increase in the number of wandering mendicants. The Brāhmaṇas were not respected as widely as before, and there was a gradual decrease in their numerical strength, many of them having been influenced by the non-Brāhmaṇical ideas and practices then prevailing in the country. The Śūdras became defiant of the upper castes, and often went out of the Brāhmaṇical society, to the great disadvantage of their co-religionists. Women became prone to demoraliza-

tion, and many of them took up the wandering life, creating serious disadvantages to their families. Thus the condition of Brāhmaṇism being insecure and the Brāhmaṇical social discipline having been disturbed, the Brāhmaṇas felt it necessary to make an attempt to popularize their own ideas and beliefs among women, Śūdras, and those members of the upper three castes, who under the influence of the new forms of faith described above had little regard for the Vedas and the Vedic principles of life and conduct. This attempt seems to have been made originally by two sections of people in two different ways: first, by the orthodox Brāhmaṇas who first began to preach the performance of *gṛhya* (domestic) rites through Smṛti works; and secondly, by the more numerous Smārtas who were in their religious outlook Brāhmas, Pāñcarātras, and Pāśupatas,[15] and who, as the comparatively early *Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, Mārkaṇḍeya,* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* show, introduced into the Purāṇas only those topics (except civil and criminal law) which were dealt with in the comparatively early Smṛti works, such as the *Manu Saṁhitā* and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti.* These Smārta adherents of the different sects changed the character of their respective deities to a great extent and brought them nearer to the Vedic gods. Their intention was to preach their own reformed Brahmāism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Śaivism, as against the heretical religions, and to popularize thereby the Vedic ideas as far as possible among all, including the worshippers of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. That this intention was at the base of the introduction of Smṛti matter into the Purāṇas, is evidenced by the Purāṇas themselves. For instance, the *Devī-Bhāgavata* says:[16] 'Women, Śūdras, and the mean twice-born (*dvija-bandhu*) are not entitled to hear the Vedas; it is only for their good that the Purāṇas have been written'. It should be noted here that this attempt of the Smārta devotees of the different gods to preach their respective faiths with a view to popularizing the Vedic principles of life and conduct was responsible for giving rise to Purāṇic Brahmāism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, etc. as distinct from their popular prototypes. But the composite *dharma* (religious and other duties), which the extant Purāṇas profess and extol, has never been allowed by the orthodox Brāhmaṇas to be identified with their own, but has been regarded by them as only inferior to the Vedic. As an example we may refer to a verse of Vyāsa which says: 'Nothing other than the Vedas is required by those who want purity of *dharma.* (The Vedas) is the pure source of *dharma*; others are called composite (*miśra*). So the *dharma* which is derived from the Vedas is the best.

[15] Those Brāhmas, Pāñcarātras, and Pāśupatas who observed in their daily life the duties prescribed by the Brāhmaṇical Smṛti works, have been called here Smārta Brāhmas, Smārta Pāñcarātras, and Samārta Pāśupatas.
[16] I. 3. 21.

But that (*dharma*) which is contained in the Purāṇas etc., is known to be inferior (*avara*).'[17]

After the present sectarian Purāṇas had come into existence, Hindu society did not become stagnant and immune from further disturbances, but had to fight hard against the influence of the Tāntric religion and the foreign invaders such as the Ābhīras, Gardabhilas, Śakas, Yavanas, Bāhlikas, and outlandish dynasties, the successors of the Āndhras In order to face successfully these fresh troubles, the Hindu rites and customs had again to be modified and adapted to the needs and circumstances of the people. Hence, with the changes in Hindu society during the four centuries from the third to the sixth, the Purāṇas also had to be recast with the addition of many new chapters on worship, vows, initiation, consecration, etc., which were rendered free from Tāntric elements and infused with Vedic rituals, in order that their importance as works of authority on religious and social matters might not decrease. With the great spread and popularity of Tāntric religion from the seventh or eighth century onward, the Purāṇas had to be re-edited once more by introducing more and more Tāntric elements into the Purāṇic rituals. Now, the work of re-editing could be done in three different ways: (i) by adding fresh chapters to the already existing ones, (ii) by replacing the latter by the former, and (iii) by writing new works bearing old titles. All these processes having been practised freely with respect to almost all the Purāṇas, not rarely by people of different sects, a few retained much of their earlier materials, some lost many of the earlier chapters, which were replaced by others of later dates, and some became totally new works. But they had all come to possess a common feature, namely, that all comprised units belonging to different ages. It should be mentioned here that additions to the Purāṇas were not always fresh compositions, but chapters and verses were often transferred from one Purāna to another, or from the Smṛti and other Sanskrit works to the Purāṇas. That this practice of transference began much earlier than A.D. 1100, is evidenced by King Ballālasena, who says in his *Dāna-sāgara* that the *Liṅga Purāṇa* took its chapters on 'big donations' from the *Matsya*, and that the *Viṣṇu-rahasya* and *Śiva-rahasya* were mere compilations.

The great importance given to the Purāṇas as authoritative works on Hindu rites and customs roughly from the second century A.D., perverted the idea of the people of later ages as to the real contents of these works. It was thought that the five traditional characteristics—*sarga, pratisarga,* etc.—were meant for the Upapurāṇas, whereas the Mahāpurānas were to

[17] For this verse of Vyāsa see Aparārka's commentary on the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (Ed. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona), p. 9 and Hemādri's *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi* (Ed. Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta) II (*Vrata-khaṇḍa*), I. 22.

deal with ten topics relating to cosmogony, religion, and society. Thus the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[18] names these ten topics as follows: *sarga* (primary creation), *visarga* (secondary creation), *vṛtti* (means of subsistence), *rakṣā* (protection), *antara* (cosmic cycle ruled over by a Manu), *vaṁśa* (genealogy of kings), *vaṁśānucarita* (dynastic accounts), *saṁsthā* (dissolution of the world), *hetu* (cause of creation etc.), and *apāśraya* (final stay of all). According to the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*[19] they are: *sṛṣṭi* (primary creation), *visṛṣṭi* (secondary creation), *sthiti* (stability of creation), *pālana* (protection), *karma-vāsanā* (desire for work), *Manu-vārtā* (information about the different Manus), *pralaya-varṇanā* (description of the final destruction of the world), *mokṣa-nirūpaṇa* (showing the way to release from rebirths) *Hari-kīrtana* (discourses on Hari), and *deva-kīrtana* (discourses on other gods). The second of these two lists of ten Purāṇic characteristics deserves special notice, as it explains clearly why, in most of the present Purāṇas, the geography of the earth, which was introduced into the earlier works in connection with re-creation, has been neglected very much, and why the accounts of the genealogies of kings and sages have been little cared for, or often fabricated. As a matter of fact, the custom of recording dynastic history ceased with the early Guptas, after whom no important dynasty or monarch of India has been described or mentioned in the Purāṇas. This proves that from the Gupta period the Purāṇic tradition took, in practice, a new trend which culminated in turning the Purāṇas into so many books of myths and legends and social and religious duties with highly imperfect, and sometimes forged, genealogical lists. Much more discouraging is the fact that, probably to compete with the followers of Buddhism, Jainism, and other heretical systems who believed in austere practices and in the sacredness of their shrines, many sections on vows, on the holy places, and so forth, were composed in different times and places and freely interpolated into the Purāṇas which in course of time came to be looked upon as their integral part. Such insertions were made even in the same period in different places so much so that these works varied in different localities even at a particular period of time. People of different sects also took absolute liberty in boundless exaggerations and making changes in the texts of the Purāṇas, with the result that it is often difficult to distinguish between fact and fancy, or originals and corruptions.

But how could the eighteen Purāṇas, which were the mouthpieces of sectaries following different faiths, be grouped together and regarded as equally important and authoritative by all of them, and how could they have believed deeply in this group, even at the sacrifice of their respective

[18] XII. 7. 9-10.

[19] IV. 131. 6-10.

sectarian interests? In reply to these questions we may refer to the spirit of religious syncretism and sectarian rivalry, that went hand in hand in ancient India, and is found in Hindu society even at the present day. These tendencies must have supplied incentives to the recasting or rewriting of the same Purāṇa sometimes by different sects. The interpolation of chapters on different deities in a particular Purāṇa must have also resulted in this manner.. Thus all the Purāṇas attained equal, or almost equal, importance in the eyes of the worshippers of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, before the grouping was made.

CHRONOLOGY AND CONTENTS OF THE PRESENT PURANAS

From what has been said above regarding the character and tendencies of the extant Purāṇas, it would appear that the majority of them, if not all, are comparatively late works possessing little coming from an early date. As a matter of fact, it is only the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (or rather *Vāyu-prokta Purāṇa*—'the Purāṇa proclaimed by Vāyu', as it is called in the chapter-colophons as well as in other places) which has preserved much of its ancient, if not original, materials, and, as such, can be rightly called the earliest of the extant Purāṇic works. The very fact that Vāyu (the Wind-god) has been said to be the first speaker of this work, seems to push up the date of its original composition to a time when Vāyu was still recognized as an important deity. The early origin of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is also shown by the *Harivaṁśa*, which repeatedly refers to Vāyu as an authority, as well as by the *Mahābhārata*,[20] in which the Sage Mārkaṇḍeya tells King Janamejaya that he has spoken to the latter about the past and future ages 'by recollecting the Purāṇa proclaimed by Vāyu' (*Vāyu-proktam anusmṛtya purāṇam*). However old our present *Vāyu Purāṇa* in its original form may have been, it was subjected to additions and alterations with the progress of time. For instance, chapters LVII-LIX, dealing with *yuga-dharma* (conduct of the people in different ages), give an account of the period ranging from the reign of the Nandas to the end of the Āndhra rule in Western India and must, therefore, have been written not earlier than A.D. 200; and chapters LXXIII-LXXXIII, on funeral ceremony, which testify unmistakably to the decadent state of Buddhism and Jainism, could not have been written earlier than the end of the second century A.D.

A careful study of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* shows that its Pāśupata character is only a later phase. But even with this new character this Purāṇa must have been highly popular at the beginning of the seventh century, because

[20] III. 191. 16.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa, a Pāśupata in faith, refers to it in his *Kādambarī*[21] and *Harṣa-carita*,[22] and says in the latter that he had this work read out to him in his native village. By his mention of a 'Purāṇa in which the whole universe has been placed (i.e. treated of) in parts',[23] Bāṇabhaṭṭa points definitely to the present *Vāyu Purāṇa* which divides its contents into four parts: (1) *Prakriyā-pāda*, comprising chapters I-VI, (2) *Anuṣaṅga-pāda*, chapters VII-LXIV, (3) *Upodghāta-pāda*, chapters LXV-XCIX, and (4) *Upasaṁhāra-pāda*, chapters C ff. It must, however, be admitted that after Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* did not cease to receive further additions and alterations; chapters and verses still continued to be inserted or taken out, giving finally to this work its present form. For instance, chapter CIV mentions Rādhā, the Tantras, and the Śākta philosophy, and is consequently of very late origin; chapters CV-CXII, praising the holy Gayā in Magadha, did not really belong to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, because they do not occur in all the manuscripts of this work and they very often appear as an independent text; and many of the verses (especially on funeral ceremony), ascribed to the *Vāyu Purāṇa* in the Nibandhas, are not found in its present text and must, therefore, have been lost. But in spite of such changes, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* has been able to preserve much of its older materials, most probably because the Purāṇic Pāśupatas, who looked upon this work as highly sacred, preserved the purity of its text as far as possible for a long time and did not allow its contents to be worked upon and changed seriously until very late.

The *Vāyu Purāṇa* is a highly interesting and important work dealing copiously with the following topics: creation and re-creation of the universe; measurement of time; origin of Agni, Varuṇa, and other gods, origin and descendants of Atri, Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, and other sages, demons, *rākṣasas*, *gandharvas*, and *pitṛs* (patriarchs); origin of lower animals, birds, trees, and creepers; genealogies of ancient kings descended from Vaivasvata Manu and Ila (or Ilā) and kings of the *kaliyuga* ending with the Guptas of Magadha; detailed geography of the earth divided into seven *dvīpas* (continents) and a number of *varṣas* (subcontinents); accounts of people living in different continents; names and description of the seven nether worlds; description of the solar system and the movements of the luminaries; description of the four *yugas* (*satya*, *tretā*, *dvāpara*, and *kali*), and the fourteen *manvantaras* (Svāyaṁbhuva, Svārociṣa, Auttama, Tāmasa, Raivata, Cākṣuṣa, Vaivasvata, Sāvarṇika, Dakṣa-sāvarṇa, Brahma-sāvarṇa, Dharma-sāvarṇa, Rudra-sāvarṇa, Raucya, and Bhautya). It also contains

[21] Ed. P. Peterson, Bombay Sanskrit Series, No. 24, p. 41—*purāṇe vāyu-pralapitam*.
[22] Ed. S. D. Gajendragadkar and A. B. Gajendragadkar (Poona), Ucchvāsa, III, p. 6.
[23] *Kādambarī*, p. 90—*purāṇam-iva yathā-vibhāgāvasthāpita-sakala-bhuvana-kośam*.

chapters on music, different Vedic schools, Pāśupata-yoga, duties of the Pāśupata *yogins*, duties of the people of different castes and orders of life, funeral ceremonies, and so on. There are a number of interesting myths and legends, such as those of Śiva's destruction of the sacrifice instituted by Dakṣa, Purūrava's love for, and union with, Urvaśī, and the birth of the Aśvins.

The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, which is called so for its dealing with the cosmic egg (*brahmāṇḍa*) and is virtually the same as the present *Vāyu Purāṇa*, has been assigned the eighteenth place in almost all the lists of eighteen Purāṇas. In view of the facts that this work has sometimes been called '*Vāyavīya Brahmāṇḍa*', that it also, like the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, is said to have been proclaimed by Vāyu, and that its chapters often agree almost literally with those of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, F. E. Pargiter has rightly said that originally these two Purāṇas were not separate. This view is supported by some of the verses quoted in the Nibandhas from the '*Vāyu Purāṇa*' or '*Vāyavīya*' but found only in the present *Brahmāṇḍa*. In a few cases, verses ascribed to the '*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*' in the works of Ballālasena, Devaṇabhaṭṭa, and Hemādri, are found not in the present *Brahmāṇḍa* but in the *Vāyu*. This also proves the original unity of the texts of the two Purāṇas.

It is not known definitely when and why the same original Purāṇa, which was named most probably after Vāyu, came to have a second version with a different title. A comparison between the dynastic accounts given in the *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa*, shows that the separation took place after A.D. 325, and most probably not earlier than A.D. 400, for the *Brahmāṇḍa* has not only the *Vāyu*'s account of the Gupta dynasty of Magadha, but agrees very closely with the text of the present *Vāyu*. The cause of separation may be sectarian, because in the *Brahmāṇḍa* there are a few chapters (viz. III. XXI ff.) which smack of Vaiṣṇavism. On the other hand, a few chapters of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, especially those on Pāśupata *vrata* and *yoga*, are not found in the *Brahmāṇḍa*.

In the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press Edition, the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* consists of two parts, of which the first is divided, like the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, into four Parts—*Prakriyā, Anuṣaṅga, Upodghāta*, and *Upasaṁhāra*—and is much the same as the present *Vāyu*, but the second part, styled *Lalitopākhyāna* (Story of Lalitā), is dedicated to the Goddess Lalitā, a form of Durgā, and teaches her worship by Tāntric rites. So this *Lalitopākhyāna* must be a very late appendage to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*.

The third most important Purāṇa is the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, which seems to come from an early date and to have been non-sectarian in its origin. This work derives its name from the ancient sage Mārkaṇḍeya whom Jaimini,

a pupil of Vyāsa, approaches for the solution of some doubts raised in his mind by the study of the *Mahābhārata*, but who refers the latter to the four wise birds living on the Vindhya hills. Consequently, it is the four birds which speak to Jaiminī in chapters IV-XLIV, although this Purāṇa is named after Mārkaṇḍeya. It is only in chapters XLV ff. that these birds are found to report what Mārkaṇḍeya had said to Krauṣṭuki on the five characteristic topics of the Purāṇas. The way in which this work refers to the present form and character of the *Mahābhārata* in its opening verses, and utilizes the contents of the latter in chapters X-XLIV, shows that at least a considerable portion of the present *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* including the aforesaid chapters was composed after the *Mahābhārata* had attained its present extent, content, and character, i.e. possibly not earlier than A.D. 200. From a careful analysis of the entire *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, it appears that these chapters were added to it about the third century A.D.

Chapters LXXXI-XCIII of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* constitute an independent and complete work called *Devī-māhātmya, alias Caṇḍī* or *Saptaśatī*, which must have been inserted into it at a comparatively late date, but certainly not later than A.D. 600. This *Devī-māhātmya* glorifies the supreme goddess Devī (Durgā) in her different forms and is a very favourite work of the worshippers of Śakti. Its wide popularity is shown not only by its innumerable manuscripts still found in all parts of the country but also by the large number of its commentaries.

In spite of the many later additions as indicated above, the present *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* contains a large number of chapters (especially XLV-LXXX and XCIV-CXXXVI) which reach back to considerable antiquity and must be remnants of the old Purāṇa. In these chapters, which have Mārkaṇḍeya as the original speaker, neither Viṣṇu nor Śiva occupies a prominent place; on the other hand, Indra and Brahmā[24] are much in the foreground, and the ancient Vedic deities, Agni and Sūrya, have been praised in several chapters by a number of hymns. There are also a large number of Sun-myths in chapters CI-CX. It is highly probable that this work was originally composed for popularizing the Śrauta and Smārta rites which had already begun to be neglected by the people.

Being originally an ancient work, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* deals, in its comparatively early chapters, with creation, recreation (including geography of the earth, especially of Bhāratavarṣa in Jambu-dvīpa), the fourteen *manvantaras*, and the accounts of kings more or less elaborately. But we find to our great disappointment that this work treats of the genealogies of kings very imperfectly, omits those of the sages, and it remarkably lacks

[24] According to Indian tradition, Brahmā was the deity of the earliest age, viz. *kṛtayuga*, and hailed from Puṣkara-dvīpa.

accounts of the dynasties of the *kaliyuga*. On the other hand, it has incorporated a good number of chapters on topics usually dealt with in the earlier metrical Smṛti works, and contains a few interesting legends, of which special mention may be made of those of King Hariścandra, whom Viśvāmitra made to suffer endless sorrow and humiliation, of Queen Madālasā, who gave instructions on self-knowledge to her sons, of whom Alarka was the youngest, of King Vipaścit who preferred to remain in hell for alleviating the sufferings of the sinners there, and of King Dama who, in order to avenge the death of his father Nariṣyanta, cruelly killed Vapuṣmat and offered his flesh and blood to the spirit of his father, together with the funeral cakes.

Unlike the three Purāṇas already mentioned, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is a sectarian work belonging to the Pāñcarātras, and purely Vaiṣṇava from beginning to end. Yet it has retained with considerable faithfulness the character of the old unsectarian Purāṇas. It is divided into six parts called *aṁśas*, each of which consists of a number of chapters. In the first three sections it deals with creation, re-creation, detailed geography of the earth and the atmosphere, description of the solar system, accounts of the fourteen *manvantaras*, names of the twenty-eight Vyāsas who lived in different ages and divided the Vedas, rise of the various Vedic schools, duties of the different castes and orders of life, funeral sacrifices, and so on ; in part four it gives, often in prose, the genealogies and accounts of kings with particular care, and contains valuable information regarding the dynasties of the *kaliyuga* ; part five, which is the longest, is given to the sports and adventures of the divine Kṛṣṇa at Vṛndāvana and Dvārakā ; and part six, which is the shortest, describes the evils of the *kaliyuga* and birth, and has discourses on *yoga* which leads to that type of knowledge by which one can realize the Supreme Being, here none other than Viṣṇu Himself.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is an early work composed most probably in the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D. Although it has the character much more of a unified work than of a mere compilation, it contains numerous such old verses on creation, re-creation, etc. as have been commonly utilized by many of the extant Purāṇas. On the other hand, chapters seventeen and eighteen of part three, which describes the story of Viṣṇu's issuing of Māyāmoha (an illusive figure) from his own body for turning the demons on the banks of the Narmadā into *arhats* (i.e. Jains) and Buddhists, are in all probability later additions. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 24 also, describing the dynasties of the *kaliyuga*, must have been revised in later times. However, this Purāṇa has preserved the best text, additions and alterations having been made in it much less freely than in the other Purāṇas. It lacks chapters on

devotional vows, holy places, etc., and is a rich store of interesting myths and legends, of which those of Dhruva, Prahlāda, and King Bharata are interesting.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* is a voluminous work dealing, besides the usual topics of the ancient Purāṇas, with devotional vows and forms of worship, holy places and rivers (especially Prayāga, Kāśī, and the Narmadā), gifts of various types, politics, omens, and portents, construction and consecration of images of gods and goddesses, house-building, social customs, funeral ceremonies, and so on. It is a conglomeration of chapters taken at different times from various sources, especially the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*. A comparison between the *Matsya* and the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, from which the former took its chapters on the most important topics, viz. *vaṁśa*, *manvantara*, and *vaṁśānucarita*, shows that the borrowing from the *Vāyu Purāṇa* was made either in the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D.; and this must be the time of the first composition, or rather compilation, of the present *Matsya Purāṇa*. It was only at subsequent periods that chapters from the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* and other works were incorporated into this Purāṇa.

The title and the non-borrowed chapters (I-XII) of the present *Matsya Purāṇa* indicate that this work was originally compiled by the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas somewhere about the river Narmadā, and it was at a much later date that the Śiva worshippers laid their hands on it and modified it with additions and alterations.

Like the other early Purāṇas, the *Matsya* contains a large number of stories and legends, of which the following deserve special mention: Devayānī's vain love for Kaca, and her ultimate marriage with King Yayāti; Yayāti's insatiety even after enjoying life for a long time, and his consequent transfer of his infirmity to his son Puru; Śiva's burning of the city of Tripura; and Kārtikeya's birth and killing of the demon Tārakā. It should be mentioned here that there are several indications in the chapters on Kārtikeya's birth which show that the *Matsya Purāṇa* has utilized the story and language of Kālidāsa's *Kumāra-sambhava*.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which is the most popular of the extant Purāṇic works, deserves special attention not only as a literary production on account of its language, style, and metre, but also as a valuable record of the theological and philosophical doctrines of the Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇvas to whom it exclusively belongs. It consists of twelve parts called *skandhas*, each divided into a number of chapters. Although it is given to the praise and worship of the divine Kṛṣṇa, who is called a 'partial incarnation' (*aṁśāvatāra*) or the Bhagavat Himself, it deals with all the characteristic topics of the ancient Purāṇas, including the dynasties of the *kaliyuga*. It

is closely connected with the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and has used the latter in its composition. It repeats much more elaborately many of the myths and legends of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and gives the biography of Kṛṣṇa in greater detail. Internal and external evidences show that the present *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* must have been written in the sixth century A.D., and most probably in its former half, but it can hardly be denied that this work has been revised and emended at times. There are three lists of incarnations of Viṣṇu, all including the Buddha, which differ from one another in length and order; and the *tulasī* plant, the Tantra and the name 'Mahāpurāṇa' for the principal Purāṇas and their ten characteristics have been mentioned in some of the chapters.

The description of the '*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*', as given in *Matsya Purāṇa*, LIII, does not agree completely with the contents of the present *Bhāgavata*. So it is highly probable that there was an earlier *Bhāgavata* which was the prototype of the present one and from which chapters have been retained in the latter. It is most probably this earlier work which has been mentioned in the *Viṣṇu*, *Kūrma*, and other Purāṇas.

The present *Kūrma Purāṇa*, which is divided into two *bhāgas* (parts) called *pūrva* (former) and *uttara* (latter), claims to be the first section, called *Brāhmī Saṁhitā*, of a much bigger work consisting of four *saṁhitās* or sections, namely, *Brāhmī*, *Bhāgavatī*, *Saurī*, and *Vaiṣṇavī*. Of the remaining three *saṁhitās*, which seem to be lost, the extant *Kūrma Purāṇa* gives us no further information. The *Nāradīya Purāṇa*,[25] however, contains a list of contents of all the four *saṁhitās*, the contents of the *Brāhmī Saṁhitā* agreeing fully with those of our extant *Kūrma Purāṇa*. According to the *Nāradīya*, the *Bhāgavatī Saṁhitā*, which consisted of five *pādas* (parts) and was termed *Pañca-padī*, dealt separately in the different parts with the duties of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras, and the mixed castes; the *Saurī Saṁhitā* was divided into six parts and dealt with the six magic acts: *śānti* (relief through removal of diseases, pacification of unfavourable planets), *vaśīkaraṇa* (taming, or making one subservient), *stambhana* (arresting another's activities), *vidveṣaṇa* (causing hatred), *uccāṭana* (making a person quit his place and occupation), and *māraṇa* (causing destruction of another); and the *Vaiṣṇavī Saṁhitā* was divided into four *pādas* dealing with *mokṣa-dharma* (duties leading to liberation) for the twice-born. As to the length of these Saṁhitās, the *Nāradīya Purāṇa* says that they contained 6000, 4000, 2000, and 5000 verses respectively.

A careful examination of the present *Kūrma Purāṇa* shows that it was originally a Pāñcarātra work with a considerable Śākta element, and that it

[25] I. 106. 1-22.

was composed between A.D. 500 and 650 ; but it was later appropriated and recast by the Pāśupatas towards the beginning of the eighth century A.D. In its early Viṣṇuite character this work approached much, like the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, to the old definition of the Purāṇa of 'five characteristics' and lacked chapters on holy places. Chapters one and two of part one and chapters one to eleven of part two of this Purāṇa which have been retained in it from its earlier form, have been changed by the Pāśupatas in such a way that it is very difficult to find them out. These Pāśupatas not only re-wrote some of the earlier sections, giving up others that went against their own interest, but introduced many new myths, legends, accounts of holy places, and the like, in order to attain their sectarian end. In later ages, the Śāktas and the Nakulīśa Pāśupatas also made further additions of materials, but these are negligible.

Having been subjected to a destructive recast, the present *Kūrma Purāṇa* has lost much of the topics characteristic of the older Purāṇas. The genealogies of kings and sages, as occurring in it, are highly imperfect, and no mention has been made of the dynasties of the *kaliyuga*. There are, of course, a few chapters on the geography of the earth and the universe, and one on the *manvantaras*. In one of the chapters it speaks of the twenty-eight Vyāsas who lived in different ages.

The passing of the *Kūrma Purāṇa* through two main stages, does not mean that there was no earlier work bearing the same title. It may be that the present *Kūrma Purāṇa* in its Viṣṇuite character had an earlier stage in which it was bereft of the Śākta element like the present *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

The remaining eleven Purāṇas, as we have them now, are all late works dealing almost exclusively with religious and social matters and containing very little of the five topics characteristic of the older Purānas. Their late origin is shown definitely by the disagreement between their contents and the description of the Purāṇas of the same titles as given in the *Matsya*, *Skanda*, and *Agni Purāṇas*. *Vāmana*, *Liṅga*, *Varāha*, *Padma*, *Agni*, *Skanda*, *Brahma-vaivarta*, and *Bhaviṣya*, are the results of destructive recasts to which their older prototypes were subjected, and *Nāradīya*, *Garuḍa*, and *Brahma*, are totally new works composed deliberately for replacing the older ones bearing the same titles. The *Vāmana Purāṇa*, as its title and description given in the *Matsya* (LIII. 45-46) and the *Skanda* (VII. 1. 2. 63-64) shows, was originally a Vaiṣṇava work belonging most probably to the Pāñcarātras. It was rewritten by the Śiva-worshippers in the ninth or tenth century A.D., retaining fragments here and there from its earlier form. The *Liṅga Purāṇa* is an apocryphal work consisting of two parts and belonging to the Liṅga-worshippers who extolled the worship of the phallic symbol of Śiva over that of his image. None of the numerous verses ascribed to the '*Liṅga Purāṇa*'

or '*Laiṅga*' in the works of Jīmūtavāhana, Vijñāneśvara, Aparārka, and many others, is found in the present *Liṅga Purāṇa*. External and internal evidences, however, show that this present *Liṅga* is not a very late work but was composed between A.D. 600 and 1000. The *Varāha Purāṇa* is primarily a Vaiṣṇava work consisting of different groups of chapters written mainly by the Pāñcarātras and the Bhāgavatas in different ages. Its original portion, consisting of chapters I-LXXXIX and XCVIII, was composed about A.D. 800, and the major portion of the rest was written before A.D. 1100. Its final chapters on Uttara-Gokarṇa appear to have been added to it not earlier than A.D. 1100, by some Śiva-worshippers who wanted to glorify this Śaiva holy place in Nepal.

The voluminous *Padma Purāṇa* belongs principally to the Vaiṣṇavas. It has come down to us in two distinct recensions, the Bengal and the South Indian. In the former recension, which has not yet been printed but which is undoubtedly more reliable than the South Indian one, the Purāṇa consists of five *khaṇḍas* or parts: *Sṛṣṭi, Bhūmi, Svarga, Pātāla,* and *Uttara*; but in the latter recension it has six parts: *Ādi* (also called *Svarga* in certain printed editions), *Bhūmi, Brahma, Pātāla, Sṛṣṭi,* and *Uttara*. Of these different *khaṇḍas*, the *Ādi* and the *Bhūmi* are late appendages composed after A.D. 900. The *Bhūmi-khaṇḍa*, in its earlier form, treated mainly of the geography of the earth ; but, as we have it now, it is entirely a Vaiṣṇava book of legends composed not earlier than A.D. 900. In the Bengal recension, the *Bhūmi-khaṇḍa* contains thirteen chapters more, of which four deal with the geography of the earth (*bhūgola*). The *Pātāla-khaṇḍa* contains three groups of chapters composed at different times, the first group belonging to the Rāmaite sect, the second to the Vaiṣṇavas, and the third to the Liṅga-worshippers. Internal and external evidences show that this *khaṇḍa* cannot be dated earlier than A.D. 800. The *Pātāla-khaṇḍa* of the Bengal recension contains thirty-one additional chapters, which deal with the description of the subterranean regions, the story of killing the demon Tripura, the legends of the kings of the Solar race especially of Rāma and his descendants, and the praise of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The *Svarga-khaṇḍa* of the Bengal recension contains accounts of the different regions (*lokas*) and stories of kings and demons, and has utilized the *Abhijñāna-śakuntalam* and the *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa. The *Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa* can be divided into two parts, of which the second does not occur in the Bengal recension. There is evidence to show that this part was added to the *Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa* after the Mohammedans had established kingdoms in India. A careful examination of the first part shows that it consists almost entirely of chapters taken from the *Matsya* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇas*, and that it was first compiled by the Brahmā-worshippers between A.D. 600 and 750 ; it

was then taken up by some non-Brāhmas, Vaiṣṇavas, Rāmāites, and Śaivas, who added to it many new chapters between A.D. 750 and 950; most probably in the former half of the eighth century A.D.; next, the Tāntric Brāhmas interpolated some verses or groups of verses after A.D. 850; and last of all the Śāktas made further additions. The evidence of the *Nāradīya Purāṇa* shows that the *Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa,* with its latest additions, must have been complete before A.D. 1400. The *Uttara-khaṇḍa* is a late conglomeration of Vaiṣṇava legends and glorifications and can scarcely be earlier than A.D. 900.

The *Nāradīya Purāṇa,* a Vaiṣṇava work, consists of two parts, of which the first incorporates the entire *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa,* which was composed by the Vaiṣṇavas about the middle of the ninth century A.D. The remaining chapters of the first part are comparatively late additions; and some of them contain detailed information regarding the contents of the eighteen principal Purāṇas now extant. The second part, though attached to the *Nāradīya Purāṇa,* is really an independent work differing in general character from the first forty-one chapters of the first part and sometimes appearing in manuscripts as an independent text. The last forty-five chapters of this part bear signs of comparatively late dates. An examination of the contents of the present *Nāradīya* shows that it was first compiled some time about the beginning of the tenth century A.D. The *Agni* and the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* are spurious Vaiṣṇava works of encyclopaedic character containing almost everything of general interest. Of these two works, the former contains summaries of the *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Harivaṁśa, Piṅgala-Chandaḥ-Sūtra, Amarakoṣa, Yuddha-jayārṇava, Hastyāyurveda* (of Pālakāpya), etc. It incorporates verses or entire chapters of many other works, such as the *Nārada Smṛti, Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa.* The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* utilizes the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti, Manu Saṁhitā, Parāśara Smṛti, Bṛhat Saṁhitā* (of Varāhamihira), *Kalāpa Vyākaraṇa* with Kātyāyana's additional chapter on verbal derivations, *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya Saṁhitā* of Vāgbhaṭa II, *Aśva-cikitsā* of Nakula, *Cāṇakya-rāja-nīti-śāstra* of Bhoja, and some of the Purāṇas, such as the *Bhāgavata, Kūrma, Vāyu,* and *Mārkaṇḍeya.* According to the *Dānasāgara* of Ballālasena, these two works were forged by the Tāntrikas for deceiving the people, and they were furnished with fictitious genealogies as well as with chapters on lexicography, testing of gems, and so on. External and internal evidences show that the *Agni Purāṇa* was compiled during the ninth century, and the *Garuḍa Purāṇa,* which was modelled on the *Agni,* was compiled in the tenth century A.D. The *Brahma Purāṇa* is entirely a new work and consists mainly of chapters taken from the *Mahābhārata, Harivaṁśa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* and *Vāyu Purāṇa.* Those chapters of this spurious work which have not been traced anywhere else, deal chiefly with the praise

of the shrines and holy places in Puruṣottama-kṣetra (Puri), Koṇārka, Ekāmra-kṣetra (Bhuvaneśvara), and Virajā-kṣetra (Jajpur), which lie in Orissa and belong respectively to the Vaiṣṇavas, Sauras, Śaivas, and Śāktas. As the chapters on Koṇārka, Ekāmra-kṣetra, and Virajā-kṣetra must have been written by different hands and inserted at comparatively late dates, it is probable that the present *Brahma Purāṇa* owed its origin to those Vaiṣṇavas of Orissa who wanted to popularize Puruṣottama-kṣetra as a great Vaiṣṇava holy place. There is evidence to show that this work was compiled between A.D. 900 and 1200.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* is a voluminous work consisting of a very large number of parts, most of which have not yet been printed. Though, like the other Purāṇas, the *Skanda* also was subjected to additions and alterations more than once, there are chapters in it which were written earlier than A.D. 1000, but it seems to contain little which can be dated earlier than A.D. 700. The *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* is one of the latest of the extant Purāṇic works. It consists of four parts—*Brahma-khaṇḍa, Prakṛti-khaṇḍa, Gaṇapati-khaṇḍa,* and *Kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa,* and preaches the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. A careful examination of this work shows that it was first composed most probably in the eighth century A.D., and that from about the tenth century it began to be changed by the Bengal authors who recast it to its present form and contents in the sixteenth century. But in spite of this late recast, certain portions have been retained in it from an earlier form of the Purāṇa. The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*[24] itself and the *Nāradīya Purāṇa* tell us that the former work consisted of five parts (*parvans*), *Brāhma, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Tvāṣṭra* (or *Saura* according to the *Nāradīya Purāṇa*), and *Pratisarga.* But the printed edition of the *Bhaviṣya* contains only four parts, *Brāhma, Madhyama, Pratisarga,* and *Uttara.* Of these, the *Madhyamaparvan,* which is not mentioned anywhere as having formed part of the *Bhaviṣya,* is a late appendage abounding in Tāntric elements. The *Pratisargaparvan,* though nominally mentioned in the *Bhaviṣya* (I. 1. 2-3), is practically a new work containing stories about Adam, Noah, Yākuta, Taimurlong, Nadir Shah, Akbar (the emperor of Delhi), Jayacandra, Pṛthvī-rāja, Varāhamihira, Śaṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Jaya-deva, Viṣṇu Svāmin, Bhaṭṭoji-dīkṣita, Ānandagiri, Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya, Nityā-nanda, Kabīra, Nānaka, Ruidāsa, and many others. It even knows the British rule in India and names Calcutta and the Parliament (*aṣṭa-kauśalya*). The *Uttaraparvan,* though attached to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa,* is really an independent work known under the title *Bhaviṣyottara* and included among the Upapurāṇas. But very different is the case with the *Brāhmaparvan,* the major portion of which must have been written between A.D. 500 and

[24] I. 2. 2-3.

900. Besides treating of the duties of women, good and bad signs of men, women, and kings, and the method of worshipping Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Skanda, and the Snakes on different lunar days, it contains a large number of chapters on Sun-worship and solar myths relating especially to the origin of the Bhojakas from the Magas of Śāka-dvīpa. This *parvan* has been profusely drawn upon by the Nibandha writers.

THE PURĀṆAS AS HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL RECORDS, AS ENCYCLOPAEDIAS, AND AS RELIGIOUS BOOKS

History in the modern sense of the term was unknown in ancient India in spite of the many-sided development of her civilization and culture; but historical tradition, chiefly relating to dynastic lists and notable events in the lives of kings, used to be handed down from generation to generation from the most ancient times. In the extant Purāṇas there are various indications which show definitely that particular care was taken in early times to study and preserve correctly the dynastic lists and accounts, which later came to be recorded more or less systematically in the Purāṇas. We have already seen that out of the eighteen works of this class, only six, namely, the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Viṣṇu*, *Matsya*, and *Bhāgavata*, come from comparatively early dates and have more or less the character of early Purāṇas. All these six works, as also those of the rest which contain genealogical lists and accounts, trace the different dynasties of ancient India to a common mythical ancestor, Vaivasvata Manu, son of Sūrya (the Sun). It has been said that Vaivasvata Manu had nine sons, of whom four were important, namely, Ikṣvāku, Nābhānediṣṭha, Śaryāti, and Nābhāga. Ikṣvāku reigned in Ayodhyā and had two sons Vikukṣi-Śaśāda and Nimi, from whom proceeded the dynasties of Ayodhyā and Videha respectively. The former dynasty, in which Rāma, son of Daśaratha, was born in much later days, is better known as the Aikṣvāku dynasty or the Solar race of Ayodhyā. Nābhānediṣṭha reigned in Vaiśālī and founded the Vaiśāla dynasty; Śaryāti ruled in Ānarta (Gujarat) and became the founder of the Śāryāta dynasty of that place; and from Nābhāga descended a line of kings of whom Rathītara became the ancestor of the Rāthītaras. Besides the sons mentioned above, Vaivasvata Manu had a daughter Ilā, or according to some Purāṇas, a son Ila who was turned into a woman Ilā. Ilā consorted with Budha, son of Soma (the Moon), and gave birth to a son, Purūravas Aila, who became the progenitor of the Aila or Lunar race of Pratiṣṭhāna (Allahabad). Purūravas Aila had six or seven sons, of whom Āyu (or Āyus) continued the main line at Pratiṣṭhāna, and Amāvasu became the founder of the dynasty of Kānyakubja (Kanauj). Āyu had five sons—Nahuṣa, Kṣatravṛddha (or Vṛddhaśarman), Rambha, Raji, and Anenas, of whom

Kṣatravṛddha founded the Kāśī dynasty. Nahuṣa's son Yayāti had five sons, who became the founders or distant ancestors of a large number of royal families, viz. the Haihayas, Yādavas (among whom Kṛṣṇa was born), Turvasus, Druhyus, Ānavas, Pauravas (among whom Yudhiṣṭhira and others were born), and so on. Long lists of kings of these dynasties have been given in many of the extant Purāṇas; and if these lists were all perfectly true, some of them would reach back to a time at least 2,000 years before the Kaurava-Pāṇḍava war of the *Mahābhārata*.

After the *Mahābhārata* war, detailed dynastic lists of three royal families only, namely, the Aikṣvākus, the Pauravas, and the kings of Magadha, continue to be given in the Purāṇas down to the time of Adhisīmakṛṣṇa, who was sixth in descent from Arjuna, the hero of the great *Mahābhārata* war. Of the other royal families, the extant Purāṇas contain very incomplete accounts.

Besides the genealogies of kings of the 'past', which ended either with the *Mahābhārata* war or, about a century later, with the reign of Adhisīmakṛṣṇa, some of the extant Purāṇas give, in the form of prophecies, a number of lists of kings of the 'future' *kaliyuga*; and in their accounts of such future kings the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Viṣṇu*, *Matsya*, and *Bhāgavata* include, with the mention of the durations of rules of the different kings, a few dynasties of the historical period, viz. the Śiśunāgas, Nandas, Mauryas, Śuṅgas, Kāṇvas, Āndhras, and Guptas, all so well known in Indian history. The ancestors of these dynasties, except the Gupta dynasty, which has not been mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, are followed by the enumeration of a series of other dynasties, mostly of low and barbarian origin (Ābhīras, Gardabhilas, Śakas, Yavanas, Tusaras, Hūṇas, etc.) which were contemporaneous with the former. After mentioning all these lines of kings, the Purāṇas give a dreary description of the social condition in northern India, which was consequent upon the foreign invasions and the spread of the non-Brāhmaṇical and anti-Brāhmaṇical religious systems. F. E. Pargiter has critically examined the texts of the five Purāṇas mentioned above and shown their importance in reconstructing the history of these dynasties.

Although, as the evidence of the Vedic, Buddhistic, and other works as well as of the inscriptions shows, there can be little doubt about the fact that ancient Indian historical tradition, as now found recorded in the Purāṇas, was in its origin very often based on facts, the connection of all these dynasties as given in the Purāṇas, except a few of the *kaliyuga*, with a common mythical ancestor is unconvincing. It is also clear how myth has played an important part in the shaping of the genealogical lists and accounts of the extant Purāṇas from early times. As a matter of fact, the present Purāṇas came gradually to lose their ancient character from about

the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier, and to turn into books of religious and social interest. Genealogies of kings and sages were treated with increasing neglect and sometimes forged, and facts were unscrupulously and complacently mixed with fiction for pleasing the common people. Consequently, the extant Purāṇas in their present forms have to be used with the greatest caution for any historical purpose. Another difficulty which confronts every reader of the Purāṇas is the want of critical editions of these works. Not even the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, which is the most important of all the Purāṇic works, for its valuable contents, has been edited critically by comparing the manuscripts of different provinces of India. It is only the intensive and comparative study of the Purāṇas based on highly critical editions which can help us to some extent in reconstructing the political history of pre-Buddhist India. But unfortunately most of the comparatively early Purāṇic works, or portions thereof, which were replaced by others of more recent dates, have been lost for ever.

No less important are the Purāṇas for tracing the social development of the ancient Hindus. The aphoristic and the metrical Law-books (Dharma-Sūtras and Dharma-śāstras) of the orthodox Brāhmaṇas give us pictures of only the ideal Brāhmaṇical society in different ages, but they do not help us in any way in understanding how far the Brāhmaṇical ideas were followed in practice, or how the people at large led their life. It is the Purāṇas which can be our main guides in this direction, only if we use them with proper discrimination and judgement. It should be mentioned here that the Purāṇas are not works of social history, but references to social conditions in them are often incidental and sometimes intentional. The Purāṇas make it clear to us that Hindu society in ancient India, unlike that of the present time, was a living one with great vital force, which could mould itself according to circumstances and absorb easily and without much ado not only the numerous native tribes scattered all over the country, but also hordes of casteless foreigners who poured into this land during the few centuries preceding and following the Christian era.

Among the other subjects of interest dealt with in the present Purāṇas is geography, which came to be introduced from early times in connection with re-creation; and many of the extant Purāṇas contain a few chapters each on this topic. According to Purāṇic tradition, the earth consisted of seven *dvīpas* or continents, namely, Jambu-dvīpa, Plakṣa-dvīpa, Śālmali-dvīpa, Kuśa-dvīpa, Krauñca-dvīpa, Śāka-dvīpa, and Puṣkara-dvīpa, each of which was divided into a number of *varṣas* or subcontinents. These *dvīpas* were surrounded by seven oceans containing water having the taste respectively of salt, sugarcane-juice, wine, clarified butter, curd, milk, and good drinking water. The Jambu-dvīpa, which occupied the central position,

had in its middle a golden mountain called Meru, from which a number of other mountains including the Himalaya radiated in different directions like the petals of a lotus. This *dvīpa* was divided into nine *varṣas* or sub-continents, one of which was called Bhārata-varṣa (India). The Purāṇas supply information about all the seven *dvīpas*—about their measurements, their mountains and rivers, their residents, their presiding deities, the longevity and general standard of morality of the people, and other details, but give special attention to the description of Jambu-dvīpa and more particularly of Bhārata-varṣa, which in early times occupied a much bigger area than at present, and which has been praised as the *karma-bhūmi* (place for work) for those who aspire after heaven or final liberation. Although the chapters on geography still contain, in spite of later modifications, much valuable information about the topography of the ancient world, especially of India, it is rather disappointing to find that the Purāṇic geographical tradition also, like the dynastic accounts, has been influenced considerably by mythology.

The encyclopaedic character of the present Purāṇas is not universal, but is peculiar to only three of them, namely, the *Matsya*, *Agni*, and *Garuḍa*, which, besides dealing with the usual Purāṇa topics, contain chapters on astronomy, astrology, chiromancy, superstitions, omens and portents, medical science, treatment of children suffering under the influence of unfavourable planets, treatment of cows, horses and elephants, knowledge of snakes, treatment of snake-bite, knowledge of precious stones, coronation and duties of kings, politics, science of war, archery, use of other arms, agriculture, gardening, metrics, grammar, lexicography, dramaturgy, poetics, music, dancing, architecture, construction of images of deities, and so on. In dealing with the topics mentioned, these Purāṇas sometimes give summaries of ancient Sanskrit works, such as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṁśa*, etc. and often plagiarize verses, or even entire chapters from other standard works, some of which have already been mentioned in connection with analysing the contents of the *Agni* and the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*. The chapters on omens and portents of the *Matsya Purāṇa* must have been based on an ancient work (viz. *Vṛddha-Garga Saṁhitā*) ascribed to Vṛddha-Garga. Thus, by turning themselves into something like encyclopaedias, the above three Purāṇas have attained additional interest and importance in that they have preserved summaries and fragments of ancient works, some of which have been lost for ever.

For this new character the *Matsya Purāṇa* is undoubtedly indebted to the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, which was written either in southern Kashmir or in the northernmost part of the Punjab sometime during the fifth century A.D., and from which the *Matsya Purāṇa* has taken a large number of

chapters, including those dealing with some of the topics mentioned above. The *Agni Purāṇa*, which, as F. E. Pargiter says, followed the *Matsya* tradition as regards the Aikṣvāku genealogy, must have imitated the latter work in its new character more successfully; and the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* was clearly modelled on the *Agni*. It is not known what led the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* to appear in such a new character. It may be that from the fourth century A.D. the Hindus began to feel keenly the necessity not only of popularizing the study of the different branches of Sanskrit learning as against the literary activities of the Buddhists, Jains, and others, but also of increasing the importance of the Purāṇas as repositories of knowledge so that these might find favour with highly educated people also.

But it is as religious works that the Purāṇas have been respectfully studied for centuries, and are still read, by the people of this country, because these works have shown them the easiest way of attaining peace and perfection in life and have put forth, often in the forms of myths and stories, easy solutions of those difficult problems with which one is sure to be confronted in one's religious and social life. As a matter of fact, the Purāṇas have rendered the greatest service in effecting the racial and religious unification of the diverse people of India. They have treated every religious faith of the soil, unless it was dogmatically atheistic, with respect and with a synthetic attitude, and accorded to it a position in the Purāṇic pantheism by explaining its deity and its principles through a reconciliation of the teachings of Sāṁkhya and Vedānta. It is the Purāṇas which have brought about unity in diversity, and taught religious toleration to the followers of different faiths by making them realize that God is one, though called by different names. It is mainly through these works that the Vedic ideas and ideals of religion and society have survived up to the present day and got wide circulation among the people of India and outside. The Purāṇas are, therefore, perfectly justified when they say:

'Yo vidyāccaturo vedān sāṅgopaniṣado dvijaḥ
Na cet purāṇaṁ saṁvidyān naiva sa syād vicakṣaṇaḥ
Itihāsa-purāṇābhyāṁ vedaṁ samupabṛṁhayet
Bibhety alpa-śrutād vedo māṁ ayaṁ prahariṣyati.'

That twice-born (Brāhmaṇa), who knows the four Vedas with the Aṅgas (supplementary sciences) and the Upaniṣads, should not be (regarded as) proficient unless he thoroughly knows the Purāṇa. He should reinforce the Vedas with the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa. The Vedas is afraid of him who is deficient in traditional knowledge (thinking) 'He will hurt me'.

The harmony which the Purāṇas brought about in the doctrines of 'knowledge', 'action', and 'devotion', and in the Vedic and non-Vedic views of life and conduct, exerted its influence in all strata of Hindu society, with the result that the life of the average Hindu of the present day presents a texture into which various ideas and practices of different times and regions have been interwoven with an unparalleled symmetry. In the eyes of a non-Hindu, the Purāṇic culture and religion appear as a bundle of contradictions. Yet a Hindu finds nothing difficult or inconsistent in his ideas and practices, and leads his life with perfect ease and harmony. He is rarely found to be absolutely foreign to the truths of life and conduct his ancestors discovered for him. Even an illiterate Hindu, living far away from the seats of learning, is not totally ignorant of the principles and philosophical truths taught in the Purāṇas; and as a result he has a very broad view of life and a deep sense of tolerance and accommodation, which can rarely be expected elsewhere of a person like him. This is so only because of the fact that the epics and the Purāṇas, have played a very important part in the life of the Hindus for more than two thousand years. They have brought home to the common man the wisdom of the saints of the highest order without creating any discord. The authors of these works took every individual into consideration and made such prescriptions as would benefit him in his social and religious life. In giving recognition to a man's personal worth, they slackened the rigours of the caste system and declared, 'Being remembered, or talked of, or seen, or touched, a devotee of the Lord, even if he be a Caṇḍāla, purifies (the people) easily'.[27] They allowed greater freedom to women and Śūdras in social and religious matters, with the result that these neglected members of Hindu society could have their own religious life and worship their deities themselves. The religion and philosophy professed by the Purāṇas had such a great appeal that even scholars, philosophers, or religious reformers, like Vijñāna Bhikṣu, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, and Jīva Gosvāmin, to mention only a few, very frequently drew upon the Purāṇas in their own works in support of their philosophical views; and this utilization led to the greater popularity of these works with all grades of Hindu population.

Sectarian excesses are sometimes found in the extant Purāṇas, but these are due to the want of proper understanding of the idea of absolute or unswerving devotion (*aikāntikī bhakti*), on which the Purāṇic religion is principally based; and it is owing to this basic idea that Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and other deities, have been praised individually as the highest one in some Purāṇa or other.

[27] *Varāha Purāṇa*, CCXI. 88.

CONCLUSION

From the above survey of the eighteen principal Purāṇas it is evident that these works have been utilized through centuries not only for educating the mass mind and infusing it with the nobler ideas of life but also for tactfully solving the religious, social and economic problems which were created in ancient India by the rise of various religious movements and the repeated invasions made by foreign races. A careful analysis of the devotional *vratas*, for instance, will amply testify to the Purāṇic Brāhmaṇa's deep insight into human nature as well as to their intelligence in cleverly tackling the various problems, especially those relating to women, from whom the life and spirit of a race proceed. It is undeniable that the extant Purāṇas can only on rare occasions claim for themselves any real merit as literary productions, but it must be admitted that in addition to their character as records of ancient geography and political history, they are of inestimable value from the point of view of the history of religion and culture of the ancient Hindus. As a matter of fact, these works afford us, more than other works of the time a great insight into all phases and aspects of Hinduism as well as into the inner spirit of the Hindu social system with its adaptability in all ages and under all circumstances, however unfavourable. They therefore deserve far more careful study than has hitherto been devoted to them.

17

THE UPAPURĀṆAS

THE EXTENT; ANTIQUITY, AND ORIGIN OF THE UPAPURĀṆA LITERATURE

THE long-standing tradition, current in all provinces of India, limits the number of the Mahāpurāṇas to eighteen, but the Purāṇa literature certainly extends beyond this traditional number. The class of works designated as Upapurāṇa consists of a large number of compilations, some of which are extensive and important, while a few can rightly claim to have originated much earlier than many of the so-called Mahāpurāṇas now extant. But unfortunately all these works have been given much less importance than the Mahāpurāṇas and they are differentiated from the latter by styling them as secondary Purāṇas. It is undoubtedly due to the disparaging prefix *'upa'* ('secondary') that these works have been treated with indifference by scholars ancient and modern,[1] although their importance as records of the social and religious history of India from the Gupta period downward can by no means be overlooked.

As in the case of the Mahāpurāṇas, a claim has been made in the Purāṇas, Smṛtis, etc. that the Upapurāṇas also are eighteen in number, even though some of the authorities making such a claim give evidence of their knowledge of the existence of a larger number of Upapurāṇas;[2] but unlike those of the Mahāpurāṇas, the different lists of 'eighteen Upapurāṇas' seldom agree with one another with regard to the titles of the individual works. The list given in the *Kūrma Purāṇa* (i. 1. 17-20) shows the following names: (1) *Ādya (Sanatkumārokta)*, (2) *Nārasiṁha*, (3) *Skānda*, (4) *Śivadharma*, (5) *Durvāsasokta* (declared by the Sage Durvāsas), (6) *Nāradīya*, (7) *Kāpila*, (8) *Vāmana*, (9) *Uśanaserita* (declared by the Sage Uśanas), (10) *Brahmāṇḍa*, (11) *Vāruṇa*, (12) *Kālikā*, (13) *Māheśvara*, (14) *Sāmba*, (15) *Saura*, (16) *Parāśarokta* (declared by the Sage Parāśara), (17) *Mārīca*, (18) *Bhārgava*.

[1] For an idea of the work done by scholars on the Upapurāṇas see R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, Vol. I, p. 1, F. N. 1.

[2] For example, after expressly mentioning that the Upapurāṇas are 'eighteen' in number and then giving their titles, the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (i. 25: 27) clearly intimates its knowledge of the *'Mārīca, Kāpila*, and other Upapurāṇas' which were outside the group of eighteen but were equally authoritative. In the present article the following editions of the Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas have been used: *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, Fifth Edition, 1334 B.S. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*—Ed. Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay, 1897. *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. Second Edition, 1314 B.S. *Devī-Bhāgavata Purāṇa*—Ed. Rāmateja Pāṇḍeya, Saṁskṛta Pustakālaya, Banaras, Samvat 1984. *Kūrma Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. Second Edition, 1332 B.S. *Matsya Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. 1316 B.S. *Nāradīya Purāṇa*—Ed. Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay, Śaka 1854. *Saura Purāṇa*—Ed. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona. Second Edition, 1924. *Śiva Purāṇa*—Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. 1314 B.S.

The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (i. 25. 23-26) gives the following eighteen: (1) *Ādipurāṇa*, (2) *Āditya*, (3) *Bṛhannāradīya*, (4) *Nāradīya*, (5) *Nandīśvara Purāṇa*, (6) *Bṛhannandīśvara*, (7) *Śāmba*, (8) *Kriyā-yoga-sāra*, (9) *Kālikā*, (10) *Dharmapurāṇa*, (11) *Viṣṇudharmottara*, (12) *Śivadharma*, (13) *Viṣṇudharma*, (14) *Vāmana*, (15) *Vāruṇa*, (16) *Nārasiṁha*, (17) *Bhārgava*, (18) *Bṛhaddharma*. The list of Upapurāṇas given in *Ekāmra Purāṇa* (i. 20 b-23) are: (1) *Bṛhannārasiṁha*, (2) *Bṛhadvaiṣṇava*, (3) *Gāruda*, (4) *Bṛhannāradīya*, (5) *Nāradīya*, (6) *Prabhāsaka*, (7) *Līlāvatī Purāṇa*, (8) *Devī*, (9) *Kālikā*, (10) *Ākheṭaka*, (11) *Bṛhannandi*, (12) *Nandikeśvara*, (13) *Ekāmra*, (14) *Ekapāda*, (15) *Laghubhāgavata*, (16) *Mṛtyuñjaya*, (17) *Āṅgirasaka*, (18) *Śāmba*. A good number of similar, but more or less varying, lists can be collected from different sources, and, in spite of the mention of a particular Upapurāṇa in different lists under different titles, these lists supply us with the titles of many more Upapurāṇas than eighteen. As a matter of fact, the number of the Upapurāṇas was far greater than this; and an examination of a multitude of Sanskrit works has yielded information on a hundred Upapurāṇas, including those mentioned in the different lists. But it can hardly be denied that there were many other Upapurāṇic works which have been lost altogether without leaving any trace of their existence.

The fact that this extensive Upapurāṇa literature includes works of comparatively late dates, does not prove that the whole literature has a late beginning. Lists of 'eighteen Upapurāṇas' occur in the *Kūrma Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, etc.; Hemādri quotes, twice in his *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi*, the verses of the *Kūrma Purāṇa* on the names of the eighteen Upapurāṇas, and Ballālasena refers in his *Dāna-sāgara* to the lists of Upapurāṇas as occurring in the *Kūrma Purāṇa* and the *Ādi Purāṇa*. On the other hand, *Matsya* LIII names only those four Upapurāṇas, namely, *Nārasiṁha*, *Nandi*, *Śāmba*, and *Āditya*, 'which were well-established in society' (*loke ye sampratiṣṭhitāḥ*) and thus betrays its knowledge of a few more Upapurāṇas, and at the same time its ignorance of any group of 'eighteen'. These and similar other evidences which can be adduced from different sources show that the date of formation of the group of 'eighteen' Upapurāṇas should be placed between A.D. 650 and 800.

This approximate date of the *grouping* must not be taken to be the date of composition of the individual works forming the group, because all the eighteen Upapurāṇas, which do not belong to any particular sect or locality, could not have been written at the same time. The mention of the *Nārasiṁha*, *Nandi*, *Śāmba*, and *Āditya* in *Matsya* LIII, shows that there were Upapurāṇas written much earlier than the date of the *formation* of the group; and such formation could be possible only when, in course of time, the Upapurāṇas attained the number eighteen. It can be taken,

therefore, that the age of the Upapurāṇas began approximately from the Gupta period. Orthodox opinion, however, is sometimes in favour of tracing the Upapurāṇas to a much earlier date.[3]

Whatever the period of origin of the earliest Upapurāṇa may have been, it must be admitted that the Upapurāṇas came into existence after the group of the eighteen principal Purāṇas had been formed for the first time.[4] The *Amarakoṣa*, which defines the five characteristics of a *purāṇa*, does not mention the word '*upapurāṇa*'; nor do the *Viṣṇu*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, and other Purāṇas containing lists of 'eighteen Purāṇas', betray any knowledge of the term 'Upapurāṇa' or of any work of this class. Further, the contents of the extant Upapurāṇas, as compared with those of the principal Purāṇas, definitely testify to their comparatively late beginning.

As to the origin of the Upapurāṇas, the *Kūrma Purāṇa* (i. 1. 16), *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Sūta Saṁhitā*), etc. record a tradition that the sages proclaimed the Upapurāṇas after listening to the eighteen Purāṇas from Vyāsa. This tradition, which is accepted as true by the Nibandha writers and others, assigns the Upapurāṇas to a date posterior to that of the Purāṇas and consequently to a position inferior to that of the latter. The *Matsya Purāṇa* goes a step further when it calls the Upapurāṇas mere subdivision (*upa-bheda*) of the Purānas and propounds the theory that any Purāṇic work which will be found to be 'different' (*pṛthak*) from the eighteen Purāṇas must be known to have originated from one or other of these Purāṇas.[5] The great popularity of this theory advanced by the *Matsya Purāṇa* is evidenced not only by its verbal reproduction in some of the Purāṇic works themselves, but also by the fact that the Nibandha writers and others refer to, or reproduce, the lines of the *Matsya Purāṇa* either in explaining the origin and nature of the different Upapurāṇas in accordance with this theory or in including in the class of Upapurāṇas those works of Purāṇic character which were not mentioned in the lists known to the respective writers, so that these last-mentioned works might be regarded as equally authoritative. The extant *Saura Purāṇa* (9. 12-13) also lends strong support to the above theory when it calls the Upapurāṇas mere supplements (*khila*) to the principal Purāṇas and attaches itself in that capacity to the *Brahma Purāṇa*.

[3] For instance, according to Mitra Miśra, the Upapurāṇas were known to Yājñavalkya, who took these works to have originated from the Purāṇas. See Mitra Miśra's *Vīramitrodaya Paribhāṣā-prakāśa* (Ed. Chowkamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1906), p. 15.

[4] It has been stated in chapter sixteen that many of the principal Purāṇas, which existed at the time of their first grouping were subsequently rewritten, sometimes more than once or replaced by later works bearing the same titles as those of the works replaced.

[5] *Matsya Purāṇa* LIII. 59 and 63—

Upa-bhedām pravakṣyāmi loke ye saṁpratiṣṭhitāḥ . . .
Aṣṭādaśabhyas tu pṛthak purāṇam yat pradiśyate/
Vijānīdhvaṁ dvija-śreṣṭhās tad etebhyo vinirgatam//



Though from these evidences it is clear that the above theory put forth by the *Matsya Purāṇa* is one of long standing and wide acceptance, an examination of the Upapurāṇas themselves shows that these works do not often look upon this theory with the same respect as the principal Purāṇas or other works do. In a large number of cases the Upapurāṇas are found to style themselves simply 'Purāṇa' and not 'Upapurāṇa' and to try to pass on their own merit without caring to attach themselves to any of the principal Purāṇas for the sake of authority;[6] and in a few cases they even vie with the principal Purāṇas by laying claim to their position.[7] Sometimes they are found to go a step further and claim to be superior to the Mahāpurāṇas.[8] It is to be noted that the older of the extant Upapurāṇas (such as the *Devī Purāṇa*, the *Nārasiṁha Purāṇa*, and the *Śāmba Purāṇa*) do not give any list of Upapurāṇas, nor do they seem to be familiar with their common title 'Upapurāṇa' or with the theory of their origin which makes them mere supplements to the principal Purāṇas. This disagreement between the time-honoured theory and the actual practice of the Upapurāṇas, especially of the older ones, naturally raises doubt as to the degree of truth contained in this theory. So, in order to acquaint ourselves with the actual state of things and thus to explain successfully this disagreement between theory and practice, we shall have to investigate into the origin of the Upapurāṇas.

After the group of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas had been formed,[9] there came into prominence many sub-sects which arose from the main sects, mentioned above, either directly or by identifying their deities, which were often of local origin, with one or other of the prominent deities of the main sects. In addition to these, there were also other independent sects, such as Saura[10] and Śākta, which began to hold the field and act rivalry with the sects already established in the country. These sub-sects and independent sects also had their Smārta adherents who interpolated chapters in the Purāṇas of the already established group, and, in some cases, wrote new and independent works styled 'Purāṇa'[11] in order to

[6] As examples we may name the *Nārasiṁha Purāṇa*, *Devī Purāṇa*, *Kālikā Purāṇa* etc.

[7] For instance, in its *Vāyavīya Saṁhitā* (i. 1. 41) the *Śiva Purāṇa* lays claim to the position of a principal Purāṇa; the *Devī-Bhāgavata* tries to take the position of the famous *Bhāgavata* of the Vaiṣṇavas by subordinating the latter to the status of an Upapurāṇa: the *Kālikā Purāṇa* claims to be the real *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* mentioned in the lists of the eighteen principal Purāṇas; and so on.

[8] For instance, the *Parāśara Upapurāṇa* regards the Upapurāṇas as more substantial (*sāratara*) than the Purāṇas.

[9] See chapter sixteen.

[10] Though Sun-worship is of very ancient origin, the Saura sect, with Persian elements in the cult of the Sun, became prominent in India much later. See Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 151-3; R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems*, pp. 153-5.

[11] It is to be noted that the *Matsya Purāṇa* (LIII. 60) mentions a '*Nandi Purāṇa*' (and not '*Nandi Upapurāṇa*') although the latter is called an '*upa-bheda*' (sub-section).

propagate their own ideas. Thus with the progress of time the number of the Purāṇas was further increased with fresh additions. But as the followers of the famous group of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas had the firm conviction that there could be no 'Purāṇa' beyond the famous 'eighteen', they were unwilling to assign to these new Purāṇic works a status equal to that of the famous Purāṇas. On the other hand, these new Purāṇic works had become too well known and popular to be ignored totally. So, they introduced into the *Matsya Purāṇa* the passage already cited, to the effect that any 'Purāṇa' 'different' (*pṛthak*) from the famous eighteen, should be known to have originated from any one of them. Thus, it appears, the original position of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas, and the rigidity of their number were maintained, and the new Purāṇic works also were given a position of authority.

The above theory of the *Matsya Purāṇa* influenced not only the later Purāṇas, but also the Upapurāṇas in some cases, and gave rise to the common title 'Upapurāṇa'[12] for the new Purāṇic works by recognizing them as mere supplements of the famous 'eighteen'. The new Purāṇic works thus came to be grouped under the common title 'Upapurāṇa' in some of the extant Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas. Some of the new Purāṇic works are actually found as supplements to one or other of the eighteen Purāṇas, or call themselves 'Upapurāṇas' in spite of their independent character.

CONTENTS AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE UPAPURĀṆAS

As to the contents of the Upapurāṇas, the *Saura Purāṇa* says that since a *purāṇa* is to deal with five characteristic topics, the subject-matter of the Upapurāṇas also includes them, as they are nothing but supplementary works (*khila*). According to the *Bhāgavata* and the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, the characteristics which a secondary *purāṇa* should have are five, while a principal one is to have ten, which are nothing but an elaboration of the traditional five. Whatever may be the views about the contents of the Upapurāṇas, an examination of the Upapurāṇas shows that very few of them conform even approximately to the above view. In spite of the great influence of the old tradition that a *purāṇa* is to deal with five subjects, the Upapurāṇas, which are more adapted to suit the purposes of local cults and usages and the religious needs of different sects than the Mahapurāṇas, and which arose at a time when the genealogies began to

The *Nārasiṁha Purāṇa*, *Sāmba Purāṇa*, *Devī Purāṇa*, etc. call themselves 'Purāṇa' and not 'Upapurāṇa'.

[12] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (XII. 7. 10 and 22) divides the Purāṇic works into two classes—(i) *Alpa* or *Kṣullaka* and (ii) *Mahat*; but the passage in which this classification occurs is of a very late date.

be neglected, are never found to be serious about the genealogies of kings and sages. In those cases in which the Upapurāṇas include such genealogies, the ancient kings, especially of the Solar and Lunar dynasties, are the chief points of interest, probably because of their giving a stamp of antiquity and authority to these works, and nothing is said about any of the dynasties of the *kaliyuga*. Even as regards those genealogies which have been included in the Upapurāṇas, no care has been taken to preserve their correctness, and new myths and legends have been unscrupulously fabricated and attached to the important names in these genealogies. But in spite of such defects, the Upapurāṇas are of great value from the point of view of the history of religion and society as they afford us a deep insight into their various phases and aspects. They supply us with valuable information about the different branches of science and literature developed in ancient India, and render us inestimable help in reconstructing, at least partially, some of those monumental Sanskrit works which have been lost for ever. In these respects the Upapurāṇas are sometimes more important than the Mahāpurāṇas, which attained a position so authoritative and enviable from an early date, for they were often worked upon by the different sectaries and, in some cases, bodily replaced by later works retaining only the earlier titles. So the texts of the Mahāpurāṇas, which are the results of innumerable changes, modifications, and interpolations made in different times and by different sects, is scarcely reliable and can be used only with great caution and careful discrimination. But very different is the case with the Upapurāṇas, which probably on account of their secondary position, have been worked upon much less freely by the later redactors and interpolators. They have thus been able to preserve, in a number of cases, their older materials along with their distinctive sectarian character. It is for this reason that among the extant Upapurāṇas there are some which are much older than many of the extant Mahāpurāṇas. The persons who subjected the Upapurāṇas to innovations described above often belonged to those sects to which the respective Upapurāṇas originally belonged. So, in spite of their modifications, interpolations, or totally new literary content, they are to be valued as the records of changes undergone in different ages by the respective sects for which these works were originally written; and the hands of people belonging to more sects than one being scarcely laid on any one of them, their study is generally a little easier than that of the extant Mahāpurāṇas.

The Upapurāṇa literature now available, may be broadly divided into the following groups in accordance with the religious views they profess: (1) Vaiṣṇava, (2) Śākta, (3) Śaiva, (4) Saura, (5) Gāṇapatya, and (6) non-sectarian.

THE VAIṢṆAVA UPAPURĀṆAS

The most important among the Vaiṣṇava Upapurāṇas are the *Viṣṇudharma, Viṣṇudharmottara, Nārasiṁha, Bṛhannāradīya,* and *Kriyā-yoga-sāra,* of which the first four are Pāñcarātra works and the last belongs to the Bhāgavatas. The *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara* were originally known as *śāstras,* and it was much later that they came to be recognized as Upapurāṇas because of their Purāṇic character. According to tradition as well as to the *Viṣṇudharmottara* itself, the *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara* constitute one complete work known by the general title *Viṣṇudharma*; and it was most probably for this reason that Alberuni took both these works to be one and made citations from the *Viṣṇudharmottara* under the name '*Viṣṇudharma*'.

The *Viṣṇudharma,*[13] which has been mentioned as a *śāstra* in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa,* is a voluminous work dealing mainly with Vaiṣṇava philosophy and rituals. It also contains a few chapters on political administration (*daṇḍa-nīti*), some on the duties of women, and a good number of myths and legends. Although it is an important work frequently drawn upon by the Smṛti writers such as Aparārka, Jīmūtavāhana, Ballālasena, Devaṇa Bhaṭṭa, and Hemādri, it has not yet been printed. A few manuscripts of this work have been preserved in London, Berlin, Nepal, and Calcutta. From internal and external evidence it appears that the work was compiled some time during the third century A.D. with the definite intention of spreading the Vaiṣṇava faith as against the heresies, especially Buddhism.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara,*[14] which is the most important and interesting in the whole range of the Upapurāṇa literature, is an extensive and encyclopaedic work, not only containing stories, myths, and legends, but also dealing with cosmology and cosmogony, geography, astronomy, and astrology, division of time, pacification of unfavourable planets and stars, omens and portents, genealogies (mainly of kings and sages), manners and customs, marriage, proper conduct and duties of women, penances, results of actions, rules about devotional vows (*vratas*) and funeral ceremonies (*śrāddha*), description and praise of various kinds of donations, duties of Vaiṣṇavas, praise of holy places, law and politics, science of war, archery, anatomy, pathology, medicine, treatment of diseases of human beings (including children) and animals such as cows, horses, and elephants, cookery, manufacture of perfumes, horticulture, grammar, lexicography, metrics, rhetoric, dramaturgy,

[13] For a detailed analysis of this work as well as of the *Viṣṇudharmottara, Nārasiṁha Purāṇa, Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa,* and *Kriyā-yoga-sāra,* see Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas,* Vol. I.

[14] Ed. Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay, Śaka 1834.

dancing, vocal and instrumental music, image-making, sculpture, painting, architecture, Vaiṣṇava theology, and so on.

Though appearing to be ambitious, the *Viṣṇudharmottara* has more the character of a compilation than of an original work. It contains summaries of, and extracts and isolated verses from, some of the early works such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, various Upaniṣads (especially the *Śvetāśvatara*), astronomical and astrological works of Garga, Vṛddha-Garga, Parāśara, and others, Smṛti works of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Viṣṇu, Nārada, and others, Bharata's *Nātya-śāstra*, and so on. It also gives us valuable information regarding the various types of works which enriched Sanskrit literature before the time of its composition. It is a matter of great regret that many of the works utilized and referred to in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* have been lost for ever. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* must have been compiled between A.D. 400 and 500 either in Kashmir, or in the northernmost part of the Punjab. It is a very popular work, and its contents have been extensively utilized by the Smṛti writers.

The *Nṛsiṁha Purāṇa*,[15] which is a work of the Pāñcarātras with Bhāgavata inclination, is one of the oldest of the extant Upapurāṇas. It glorifies Narasiṁha, a form of Viṣṇu, and takes him to be identical with Nārāyaṇa, eternal Brahman. As is usual with Purāṇic works, it deals with the five characteristic topics of the Purāṇas, and has a few chapters on manners and customs, practice of *yoga*, and the methods and praise of Narasiṁha worship. It contains short genealogical lists of the kings of the Solar and the Lunar dynasty, the former ending with the Buddha, son of Śuddhodana, and the latter with Kṣemaka, grandson of the famous Udayana and Vāsavadattā. Among the myths and legends described in it, that of Yama and Yamī is the most interesting. This work was translated into Telugu about A.D. 1300, and is profusely drawn upon by the Smṛti writers, early and late. It is familiar with the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, mentions the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the extinct *Varāha Purāṇa*, and utilizes the *Vāyu Purāṇa* in its story of the birth of the twin gods, Aśvins. These facts show that it was composed most probably in the latter half of the fifth century. It contains a few chapters (XLI-XLIII, LXIV and LXVIII) and a good number of grouped or isolated verses which were inserted later by the Pāñcarātras and the Bhāgavatas. Chapters (LVII-LXI) of this Upapurāṇa are found to appear as an independent Smṛti work bearing the title '*Hārīta Saṁhitā*' or '*Laghu-hārīta Smṛti*'.[16]

[15] Ed. Gopal Narayan and Co., Bombay. Second Ed., 1911.

[16] See *Ūnaviṁśati Saṁhitā* (Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta), pp. 127-39; *Dharma-śāstra Saṁgraha* (Ed. Jīvānanda Vidyāsāgara, Calcutta), Vol. I, pp. 172 ff.

The *Bṛhannāradīya Purāṇa*, which is included only in the lists of Upapurāṇas given in two Purāṇas, the *Ekāmra* and the *Bṛhaddharma*, has been published in Calcutta by the Vaṅgavāsī Press and the Asiatic Society. It also is a work of the Pāñcarātras with a Bhāgavata inclination, and describes the Vaiṣṇava festivals and ceremonies illustrated by various legends. Some chapters of it are devoted to the glorification of the Ganges, the duties of the castes and orders, funeral sacrifices and expiations, and so forth. It is pre-eminently a work on devotion to Viṣṇu; which is said to have ten gradations (viz. *tāmasādhamā, tāmasā-madhyamā*, etc.) and to be the only means of attaining salvation. It presents Mahāviṣṇu, who becomes Brahmā, the inferior Viṣṇu, and Śiva through the three *guṇas*, and states that Viṣṇu's Śakti, which permeates the whole world and effects its creation, preservation, and destruction, is known by such names as Lakṣmī, Umā, Durgā, Bhāratī, Bhadra-Kālī, and is the Prakṛti and Māyā which subjects creatures to rebirth. It is tolerant of Śaivism and warns people against differentiation between Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. Various internal and external evidences, and the use of this work first and almost exclusively by the Bengal Smṛti writers show that it must have been written between A.D. 750 and 900, either in Bengal or in that part of Orissa which was adjacent to Bengal.

The *Kriyā-yoga-sāra*,[17] which is included in the list of Upapurāṇas given in *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (i. 25), conceives of Mahāviṣṇu (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) as identical with Paramātman, and recommends the study of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. It advocates *bhakti*, lays special stress on *dāsya-bhakti*, and describes Kriyā-yoga, *yoga* by work, which it takes to consist of (i) worship of Gaṅgā, Śrī, and Viṣṇu, (ii) donation, (iii) devotion to Brāhmaṇas, (iv) observance of the *ekādaśī-vrata*, (v) regard for *dhātrī* trees and *tulasī* plants, and (vi) hospitality to guests. It records valuable information on the state of religion and society in Bengal consequent upon the spread of Buddhism and other non-Vedic and anti-Vedic religious systems, and mentions some interesting rites and customs prevalent in eastern Bengal. It is a distinct and independent work of Bengal and most probably of its eastern part, and must have been composed towards the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century A.D. Besides the Vaiṣṇava Upapurāṇas mentioned above, there are a few others, viz. *Bhārgava Upapurāṇa, Dharma Purāṇa, Puruṣottama Purāṇa, Ādi Purāṇa*, and *Kalki Purāṇa*, of which the first three are still preserved in manuscripts and must have been written earlier than A.D. 1200, and the last two are comparatively late works of minor importance.

[17] Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. Also printed with the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Ed. of the *Padma Purāṇa*.

THE ŚĀKTA UPAPURĀṆAS

Among the Upapurāṇas dealing with Śakti worship the following have come down to us: *Devī Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa, Mahā-Bhāgavata, Devī-Bhāgavata, Bhagavatī Purāṇa, Caṇḍī Purāṇa* (or *Caṇḍikā Purāṇa*), and *Satī Purāṇa* (also called *Kālī* or *Kālikā Purāṇa*). Of these, the first four, which are more important, are now available in print, and the rest in manuscripts. It is remarkable that all the Śākta Upapurānas mentioned above have been much influenced by the Tantras.

The *Devī Purāṇa,*[18] as we have it now, is only a part of the original work, which must have been a much bigger one. It is one of the most important of the Śākta Upapurāṇas and deals mainly with the exploits and worship of Devī who, though being the primordial and pre-eminent Energy, incarnated herself as Vindhyavāsinī on the Vindhya Hills. It contains various interesting stories, and records important information about the following different incarnations of Devī and her original nature; her relationship with Śiva and other gods; Śākta iconography and Śākta vows and worships; Śaivism (as related to Śāktism), Vaiṣṇavism, Brahmāism, and Gāṇapatyaism; warfare; the construction of towns and forts; the means of their protection; the different Vedic schools; the Upavedas, Aṅgas, and Upāṅgas; the science of medicine; manuscripts and the method of their copying; the script and materials to be used for the purpose; the characteristics of the scribes; the method of making gifts to these; holy places (in connection with which many countries and towns of historical interest have been named); different kinds of gifts; customs and usages; and so on. It was written in Bengal, most probably somewhere near Tamluk, during the seventh century A.D. It should be mentioned here that the method of Devī worship, as given in this Upapurāṇa, is very different from that followed in present-day Bengal.

The present *Kālikā Purāṇa,*[19] which was written somewhere in, or very near about, Kāmarūpa in Assam, is regarded as one of the most authoritative works by the comparatively late Nibandha writers especially as regards Śakti-worship. It deals with the exploits and worship of Kālī or Kālikā, who is primarily the *yoga-nidrā* and *māyā* of Viṣṇu, but who later became the wife of Śiva as Satī, daughter of Dakṣa, and Kālī or Kālikā, daughter of Himavat, for the good of the world; and in connection with these topics it narrates many interesting stories (including that of the birth of Sītā and Naraka from the sacrificial ground of King Janaka of Videha) and introduces chapters on the mountains, rivers and holy places of Kāmarūpa, duties and conduct of

[18] Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta. Second Edition, 1334 B.S.
[19] Ed. Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, 1316 B.S. Also published by the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay, Śaka 1829.

kings, construction of forts, manners and customs, and so on. This Upapurāṇa was written not later than A.D. 1100 and most probably in the tenth or eleventh century, and it contains valuable materials for the study of the social, religious. and even political history of Kāmarūpa.

The *Mahā-Bhāgavata*,[20] which is distinct from the *Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, advocates Śāktism with a Śaiva tendency. It conceives Kālī as Parabrahman as well as the wife and Śakti (Energy) of Śiva and narrates many interesting and to some extent peculiar stories, such as those of Kālī's exploits as Satī, Pārvatī, Gaṅgā, Kṛṣṇā, etc., her appearance as the ten Mahāvidyās, her worship by Rāma for killing Rāvaṇa, and so on. It should be mentioned here that most of these stories are found to occur, with their characteristics, in many of the Sanskrit and vernacular works of Bengal.

The *Mahā-Bhāgavata*, which the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* includes among the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas, must not be taken to be an early work. Internal and external evidences show that it was written in Bengal, and most probably in its eastern part which was adjacent to Kāmarūpa, some time about the tenth or eleventh century A.D.

The *Devī-Bhāgavata*, though a work of the eleventh or twelfth century A.D., claims to be the real *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and includes the Vaiṣṇava *Bhāgavata* among the Upapurāṇas. But it really is an Upapurāṇa adapted carefully by its author to the description of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contained in the *Matsya*, *Agni*, *Skanda*, and other Purāṇas. An examination of this work shows that its author was a Smārta Śākta Brāhmaṇa of Bengal, lived for a long time in Banaras, and then wrote this work for infusing Śākta ideas into the members of different sects by adapting it, as far as practicable, to the views of these sectaries. It conceives of a central goddess named Devī Śrībhuvaneśvarī, who is a maiden having four hands and three eyes and living in a region called Maṇi-dvīpa. She holds a noose (*pāśa*) and a goad (*aṅkuśa*) in two of her hands, and assures granting boon and safety with the other two. In her supreme state she is identical with Parabrahman and Paramātman, but in creation she takes to the *guṇas*, and divides herself into Puruṣa and Prakṛti, and it is she who appears as Durgā, Gaṅgā, and others for accomplishing different objects.

The *Devī-Bhāgavata* lays special stress on *bhakti* (devotion) as a means of realizing Devī, and takes *jñāna* (knowledge) to be the same as *bhakti* in its highest state. It holds the Vedas in high esteem and decries the Tantras whenever they go against the Vedas.

The remaining three Upapurāṇas (viz. *Bhagavatī Purāṇa*, *Caṇḍī Purāṇa*, and *Satī Purāṇa*), are all of late origin and minor importance, and

[20] Ed. Gujarati Printing Press, Bombay, 1913. Also published by the Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta.

no writer of Smṛti or any other works found to show knowledge of any of them.

THE ŚAIVA UPAPURĀṆAS

The Upapurāṇas that belong to the Śiva worshippers are: *Śiva Purāṇa, Saura Purāṇa, Śivadharma, Śivadharmottara, Śiva-rahasya, Ekāmra Purāṇa, Parāśara Upapurāṇa, Vāsiṣṭha-laiṅga Upapurāṇa, Vikhyāda Purāṇa,* and so on. Of these works, it is only the *Śiva,* the *Saura,* and the *Ekāmra Purāṇa* which have been printed up till now, the rest being preserved in manuscripts. The *Śiva Purāṇa* is a voluminous work dealing with Śaiva philosophy, myths, and rituals, and contains very little of the principal characteristics of a Mahāpurāṇa. Besides the six or seven *saṁhitās* constituting its printed edition, there are a few more which can be ascribed to it, and among them are *Īśāna Saṁhitā, Īśvara Saṁhitā,* and *Sūrya Saṁhitā.* The *Mānavī Saṁhitā,* which also claims to belong to the *Śiva Purāṇa,* is most probably a work of Bengal. According to the Bengal tradition as known from the Bengal manuscripts, the *Śiva Purāṇa* consists of two parts, the first having the same text as that of the *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā* and the second consisting invariably of thirty-six chapters in the Bengal manuscripts.

A thorough examination of the present *Śiva Purāṇa* shows that the part, now going under the title *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā,* is the original *Śiva Purāṇa,* and that it was written by a pre-Vedic Pāśupata of Bengal during the eighth century A.D. With the spread of Āgamic Śaivism in later days, an Āgamic Śaiva, most probably of southern India, wrote, in the ninth or tenth century A.D., a new *Śiva Purāṇa* in two parts which are now found to constitute the *Vāyavīya Saṁhitā.* He intended that this new work might popularize his reformed views by competing successfully with the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and also occupying the importance of this Purāṇa's place. The Āgamic Śaivas did not stop here. They went on writing new works, all bearing the title '*Śiva Purāṇa*' in the body of their texts, from different parts of India and tried to popularize their own views through them. The Āgamic Pāśupatas also wrote new works known as *Śiva Purāṇa* with the same object. All these isolated *Śiva Purāṇas* could not be allowed to remain separate and weaken the claim of the *Śiva Purāṇa* to the position of a Mahāpurāṇa by creating a confusion in the minds of the people; so they were put together, most probably by an Āgamic Śaiva, and taken to be so many Saṁhitās of the *Śiva Purāṇa,* and the theory was propounded that the *Śiva Purāṇa* consisted of twelve Saṁhitās and one lac of verses. But curiously enough, the *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā,* which precedes all the other Saṁhitās in date, was included neither in the list of twelve Saṁhitās nor

in that of seven as given in the Bombay Edition, most probably beacuse of its prominently pro-Vedic character. This exclusion, however, did not discourage the Pāśupatas of Bengal. With the spread of Āgamic influence they wrote the second part and attached it to their original *Śiva Purāṇa* (which now appears as the *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā*) in order that the 'complete' *Śiva Purāṇa* thus created, might have as much claim to the position of a Mahāpurāṇa as the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and the *Vāyavīya Saṁhitā.*

The present *Saura Purāṇa,* which has been published by the Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, and the Ānandāśrama Press, Poona, is a work of the Pāśupatas, composed between A.D. 950 and 1050 somewhere about the north-western part of northern India. It glorifies Śiva and Pārvatī and shows how the Pāśupatas tried hard to retain their own position as well as their numerical strength against the spread of Buddhism, Jainism, and other heretical systems, and especially of Vaiṣṇavism. In three of its spurious chapters (XXXVIII-XL) it contains amusing stories denouncing the system of Madhvācārya, which was gaining ground to the great disadvantage of the Śiva worshippers. This work has been drawn upon by Hemādri, Mādhavācārya, and other Smṛti writers.

The *Śivadharma,* which is a *śāstra* according to itself as well as to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa,* came to be recognized as an Upapurāṇa, and was included in almost all the lists of eighteen Upapurāṇas. It is a short treatise of twelve chapters, in which Nandikeśvara reports to Sanatkumāra what Śiva said to Pārvatī and Kārttikeya on the following topics: origin and worship of the phallic emblem of Śiva, construction of temples for the deity, offer of tridents and other things to him, making gifts for his pleasure, fasting on days sacred to him, duties of Śiva worshippers, and so on. It decries the Vedic rites as being highly expensive and tiresome, and extols the various acts of service to Śiva. It is an early work of the pro-Vedic Pāśupatas, who compiled it between A.D. 200 and 500. It has been mentioned in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (*Vāyavīya Saṁhitā*) and drawn upon by Devana Bhaṭṭa, Hemādri, Mādhavācārya, and a few others.

Like the *Śivadharma,* the *Śivadharmottara* also belongs to the pro-Vedic Pāśupatas. It consists of twelve chapters, in which Skanda speaks to Agasti on the following topics: various duties of the Śiva-worshippers, imparting of knowledge to the devotees of Śiva, making donations to worthy recipients, sins and the sufferings of sinners, rebirths, attainment of knowledge of Śiva, practice of Śiva-yoga, and so on. It has been mentioned in the *Ekāmra Purāṇa* and drawn upon by Aparārka, Hemādri, Mādhavācārya, and a few others. The internal and external evidences show that it was composed between A.D. 700 and 800.

The *Ekāmra Purāṇa,* which is a fairly big work on the praise of

-Ekāmra-kṣetra (or Bhuvaneśvara) in Orissa, calls itself a 'Saṁhitā of 6000 verses', and has Sanatkumāra as the speaker. It belongs to the Āgamic Pāśupatas, refers to a '*Śiva Saṁhitā*', the Āgamas and the '*Śiva Tantras*', and regards the *Śivadharmottara* as an authoritative work on Śiva-yoga. Internal and external evidences show that it was written in the tenth or eleventh century A.D. The remaining Śaiva Upapurāṇas are minor and late works scarcely deserving any serious attention.

THE SAURA UPAPURĀṆAS

Although chapters and extracts on Sun-worship occur in some of the Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas, it is only the *Sāmba Purāṇa* which deals exclusively with the reformed cult of the Sun by way of narrating the interesting story of Sāmba's establishing an image of the Sun at Sāmbapura in Mitravana, and settling eighteen families of Magi priests brought by him from Śāka-dvīpa for the regular worship of the image. This work, which has been published by the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay, is a short but composite Upapurāṇa containing a number of subsidiary stories of interest and dealing with creation, details of the solar system, eclipses, geography of the earth, description of the Sun and his attendants, construction of images of these deities, details of *yoga*, manners and customs, rites and rituals, initiation, dissertations on *mantras*, results of actions, donations, and so on. A careful examination of this work shows that it consists of several groups of chapters written by different hands in different regions and ages, its earliest portions being written in the western part of northern India between A.D. 500 and 800 and most probably towards the beginning of this period.

THE GĀṆAPATYA UPAPURĀṆAS

The comparatively late origin of the Gāṇapatya sect must be responsible for the fact that there is no early Purāṇic work dealing exclusively with the praise and worship of Gaṇapati. The only two Upapurāṇas belonging to this sect are the *Mudgala Purāṇa* and the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*, which record very late ideas of Gaṇapati, and which must have been written in northern India at later dates with the definite object of infusing Gāṇapatyaism with Vedic ideas.

The *Mudgala* or *Maudgala Purāṇa* is still preserved in manuscripts, and deals with the following nine incarnations of Gaṇeśa: Vakra-tuṇḍa, Eka-danta, Mahodara, Gajānana, Lambodara, Vikaṭa, Vighna-rāja, Dhūmra-varṇa, and Yoga. It has imbibed Tāntric influence, and speaks of thirty-two forms of Gaṇapati, whereas the *Sāradā-tilaka* and the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*

mention fifty-one and fifty-six respectively. It is probable that this work was written between A.D. 900 and 1100.

Unlike the *Mudgala*, the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* has been published from Poona and Bombay. It narrates interesting stories for the glorification of Gaṇeśa and contains important materials for the study of the growth of the sect as well as its deity. The internal and external evidences show that it was written between A.D. 1100 and 1400.

THE NON-SECTARIAN UPAPURĀṆAS

The Purāṇic works of this type are the *Bhaviṣyottara* and the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, both of which are now available in printed forms.

The *Bhaviṣyottara*, though printed in the Veṅkaṭeśvara Edition of the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* as forming its last part, is really a distinct and independent Upapurāṇa of wide recognition. It is a loose collection of materials taken from various sources, has very little of the five characteristics of a *purāṇa*, and is practically a work on vows (*vratas*), festivals, and donations, which offer an interesting study from the sociological and religious points of view. Internal and external evidences show that it was composed between A.D. 700 and 800.

The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, which has been published by the Vaṅgavāsī Press and the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, is an interesting work written in Bengal during the latter half of the thirteenth century A.D. It names the 'thirty-six' mixed castes of Bengal with their respective professions, accounts for their origin, describes many of the popular rites and festivals, and contains very valuable materials for the reconstruction of the social and religious history of Bengal.

MISCELLANEOUS UPAPURĀṆAS

In addition to the Upapurāṇas mentioned above under different heads, there are a number of others, mostly preserved in manuscripts, viz. *Ātma, Bhūgola, Brahmavaivarta, Brahma-Nārada, Jaimini, Kanyakā, Kāpila, Kedāra, Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta, Mānava, Mārīca, Nīla-mata, Vasiṣṭhottara*, and so on. Of these, the *Nīla-mata* (or *Nīla*) *Purāṇa*, though mentioned only in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, is highly interesting and important from the point of view of the history, legendary lore, and topography of Kashmir. It has been published more than once in India. As Kalhaṇa (about A.D. 1148) regarded this Purāṇa as a venerable work, and utilized its contents in writing the ancient history of Kashmir, it must have preceded him by a few centuries. The rest are mostly works of minor importance and of comparatively late dates.

Besides the Upapurāṇas mentioned above, there were many which

have been lost, viz. *Ādi* (or *Ādya*, which was different from the present *Ādi Purāṇa* of the Vaiṣṇavas), *Āditya*, *Ākheṭaka*, *Āṅgirasa*, *Auśanasa*, *Bārhaspatya*, *Bhāgavata*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Bṛhad-auśanasa*, *Bṛhad-vāmana*, and so on.

The foregoing accounts of the Upapurāṇas will show that though generally of little importance as records of the political history of ancient and mediaeval India, the Upapurāṇa literature is a rich and vast one covering a long period from the beginning of the Christian era down to the sixteenth century A.D. and requiring very careful study from various points of view.

18

THE ETHICS OF THE PURĀṆAS

DHARMA or duty forms the basis of Purāṇic ethics, and it embraces all those factors which contribute to the progress and well-being of the individual, society, and the world at large. These factors include both the possession of virtues (*guṇas*) and the proper discharge of one's duty (*karma*). The Purāṇas recognize two types of *dharma*: *sādhāraṇa* (generic) and *viśeṣa* (specific). The latter is also known as *svadharma*.

In this world-family of *sthāvara* (unmoving) and *jaṅgama* (moving) creation, the lives in the different types and grades of creation are mutually linked up. The factor contributing to the progress and welfare of one life does and should contribute to the well-being of another life also. Individual happiness, to be real and lasting, should make for the happiness of the lives around that individual. Otherwise it will turn out to be unreal, impermanent, and painful in its result.

The individual who forms an integral part of human society owes a duty to himself and to those around him. The society rises or sinks with him. Hence, in the interest of the society, he must raise himself to his fullest stature. It is both an individual and social duty. Between individual and social duties there is no conflict.

Dharma contributes to the preservation, progress, and welfare of human society, and in a wider sense, of the whole world. In the scheme of life's eternal values (*puruṣārthas*) *dharma* occupies the premier and basic place.[1] It is considered to be the best kith and kin for the embodied Soul following it even in death[2] and also to be the perennial source of perfection and bliss. The waning strength and stability of *dharma* in the four *yugas* is graphically depicted by representing it as a majestic bull which stood firm on its four legs in the golden age of the world (*kṛtayuga*) and lost one of its legs in the succeeding two *yugas*, *tretā* and *dvāpara*, to stand tottering on a single leg during the present *kaliyuga*.[3]

The Purāṇas have made a successful attempt at reconciling *sādhāraṇa-dharma* with *svadharma*. The former includes the possession of certain humanizing virtues and actions based thereon, which conduce to the welfare of the entire creation. The latter is a practical application of the former within a particular sphere by an individual belonging to a class characterized

[1] *Brahma*, CLXX. 36.
[2] *Ibid.*, CLXX. 39; *Gar.*, CCXXI. 24.
[3] *Ibid.*, CLXXV. 24; *Liṅga*, XXXIX. 13.

by certain prominent qualities (*guṇas*). The scheme of *varṇa* and *āśrama-dharmas* which the Purāṇas unanimously advocate, is based upon the duties of the individuals of a class and has as its aim the efficiency, welfare, smooth working, and material and spiritual perfection, of the society as a whole.

The *sādhāraṇa-dharmas* are universal in scope and eternal in nature. Some of the Purāṇas enumerate them as ten like the commandments of Christ or the Buddha, while others add a few more to the list. The *Padma, Agni, Kūrma,* and *Garuḍa Purāṇas*[4] mention *ahiṁsā* (non-injury), *kṣamā* or *kṣānti* (forbearance), *indriyanigraha* or *śama* and *dama* (self-control), *dayā* (compassion), *dāna* (charity), *śauca* (purity), *satya* (truth), *tapas* (penance), and *jñāna* (wisdom) among them. *Dhṛti* and *akrodha* (fortitude and freedom from anger) mentioned in other Purāṇas are only aspects of *kṣamā*. *Tyāga* (renunciation) is implied by *dāna*. *Asteya* (non-stealing) and *ārjava* (uprightness) are aspects of *satya*. *Jñāna* comprehends *vidyā*. *Tapas* includes *brahmacarya* (celibacy), *dhyāna* (meditation), *ijyā* (sacrifice), and *deva-pūjā* (worship of gods). *Priyavāditā* (sweet speech), *apaiśūnyam* (freedom from back-biting), *alobha* (freedom from avarice), and *anasūyā* (freedom from jealousy) are comprehended in *ahiṁsā*.

Ahiṁsā is declared as the *dharma par excellence*.[5] It comprehends all the other *dharmas*.[6] *Kṣamā, dayā, śauca,* and *satya* which result in the eschewing of injury to others are rooted in *ahiṁsā*. It is based on the fundamental conception that the lives in the world from the highest to the lowest are mutually linked up. Any part of it can suffer harm only at the risk of another part and ultimately of the whole, just as the defect in a nut or screw affects adversely the smooth-working of the entire machine. The ten varieties of injury enumerated in the *Agni Purāṇa*[7] include not only the causing of different grades of physical pain, but also back-biting, obstructing another's good, and betrayal of a trust. The kind treat all beings alike, whether man or mosquito, for they all belong to the same family of creation.[8] Those who inflict pain are reborn with defective faculties.[9] One who neither kills nor causes killing nor approves of it attains bliss and divinity.[10] He best pleases God.[11] *Ahiṁsā* rests on the practice of virtues like *dayā* (compassion) and the avoidance of vices like *kāma* (desire) and *krodha* (anger). Since the vices have their root in the absence of self-control, *indriyanigraha* (control of the senses) is an indispensable prerequisite for practising *ahiṁsā*. The ethics of *ahiṁsā* is expressed in the significant expression of the *Padma*

[4] *Pad.*, II. 69. 5; *Agni*, CLXI. 17; *Kūr.*, II. 65-7; *Gar.*, CCXXI. 24.
[5] *Pad.*, I. 31. 27: *Ahiṁsā paramo dharmo hy ahiṁsaiva param-tapaḥ.*
[6] *Ibid.*, I. 31. 37; *Agni*, CCCLXXII. 4.
[7] *Ibid.*, CCCLXXII. 5, 6.
[8] *Pad.*, I. 31. 28.
[9] *Ibid.*, I. 31. 34.
[10] *Brahma*, CCXXIV. 53-54.
[11] *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 15.

Purāṇa,[12] 'Do not do unto others, what you do not desire for yourself'. Behind this ethics lies the knowledge of the Ātman (supreme Soul) as immanent in all creatures. This is *ātmajñāna* and one who possesses it will not injure other creatures. It leads to the highest bliss.

Another aspect of *dharma* is *satya*. Its greatness is illustrated in the Purāṇas through such stories as of Hariścandra and Rukmāṅgada.[13] *Satya* is the highest *dharma*. The world is supported on it.[14] It purifies speech.[15] It is the basis of the *puruṣārthas* and the source of happiness and bliss. *Asatya*, its opposite, includes such sins[16] as lying, betraying, back-biting and stealing. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[17] condemns even a palatable lie. 'What conduces to the welfare of creatures is *satya*' says the *Agni Purāṇa*.[18] Further commenting on its scope it says, 'One should speak what is true and what is agreeable. But one should avoid an unpalatable truth and a palatable lie. This is the eternal law.'[19] *Satya* endures for ever. All laws of Nature (*ṛta*) are expressions of truth and work with perfect accuracy and changelessness. *Satya* contributes to the welfare and harmony of society as a whole. It engenders mutual trust and love, and binds the individuals together. On the contrary, if the individuals were to distrust, deceive and betray one another, the unity and harmony of society would be jeopardized. Hatred and discord would take the place of love and harmony. The ethics of *satya* is also based on the conception of the unity of the Self. One should feel oneself as identical with or at least as similar to other selves. Not to tell the truth is tantamount to distrusting the other self. Distrust proceeds from regarding the other self as separate from or as opposed to one's self. It results in preventing another person from sharing with one's self a common knowledge which should be the same for all selves. *Satya* promotes unity. It is at once an ethical and a social virtue.

Śauca (purity) is another indispensable socio-ethical virtue. It ensures a healthy life. Its external and internal aspects which are mutually complementary are mentioned in the *Agni Purāṇa*. The former is achieved through cleansing with water and other materials and the latter through cleansing the mind of its impurities.[20] These are the evil propensities like *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger) and the like, and have to be cleansed through

[12] *Pad.*, I. 56. 33: *Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣām na samācaret*
[13] *Bhāg.*, IX. 7.
[14] *Brahma*, CCXXVII. 22-38 : *satyamūlam jagat sarvam.*
[15] *Agni*, CLXI. 6-7.
[16] *Pad.*, I. 60. 25 ; *Viṣṇu*, II. 6. 7 ; *Brahma*, CCXVII. 87-109.
[17] *Viṣṇu*, II. 12. 114: *priyaṁ ca nānṛtaṁ brūyāt.*
[18] *Agni*, CCCLXXII. 7: *Yad-bhūtahitaṁ-atyantaṁ vacaḥ satyasya lakṣanam.*
[19] *Ibid.*, CCCLXXII. 8: *Satyaṁ brūyāt priyaṁ brūyāt na brūyāt satyaṁ apriyam, Priyaṁ ca nānṛtaṁ brūyāt esa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ.*
[20] *Ibid.*, CCCLXXII. 18: *Mṛjjalābhyāṁ smṛtaṁ bāhyaṁ bhāvaśuddherathāntaram.*

the acquisition of their opposites like *vairāgya* (spirit of renunciation) and *kṣamā* (forbearance). These are the *sāttvika* qualities making for enlightenment and have to be developed by a system of discipline consisting of *dama* and *śama* (control of the senses) and *tapas* (austerity). The *Agni Purāṇa* speaks of the mental, vocal, and physical aspects of *tapas* in the form of eschewing desires, chanting prayers, and worshipping God.[21] In a wider sense *tapas* includes yogic discipline also. Disinterested actions also purify the mind. In fact every good thought, word, and deed fulfils this purpose. Good thought includes not only kind thought but thinking of God also. Good speech denotes besides sweet and beneficent speech singing the Lord's glory. Good action consists not only in philanthropic deeds but also in the various modes of divine worship advocated by the Bhakti cult. Its purifying and sublimating power is specially stressed in the *Viṣṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇas.* It is declared as the highest *dharma*, the best way of pleasing the Lord, and as the harbinger of bliss.[22] In prescribing *bhakti* as an effective means of mental purification and of attaining ultimate bliss, the Purāṇas take into consideration the difference in individual tastes. Hence they recommend devotion to one's favourite God, Śiva or Viṣṇu or any other. But in no way do they countenance discrimination and hatred against any God.[23] One who discriminates against a God is the worst sinner, for all Gods are essentially one. *Bhakti* develops with detachment from our self and attachment to God. A mind bereft of evil propensities breeds good thoughts. Whatever is done with such a mind pleases the Lord and becomes fruitful. Pure mind and its resultant, true speech, lead to heaven.[24] A person pure in mind will not act in a way detrimental to another's interests. Thus the mind is the source of all purity. It shapes the destiny of an individual[25] and of the society to which he belongs. Purity is to be observed not only for ourselves but also for the sake of others around us. It is a social virtue.

Dāna is another aspect of *dharma* stressed in the Purāṇas. It is a social duty based on the ethical virtues of *dayā*, *tyāga*, *ārjava*, and *samatā* (equanimity). Its greatness is illustrated through such stories as those of Śibi, Karṇa, and Dadhīci. The ethics of *dāna* consists in the fact that it benefits both the giver and the receiver. While it humanizes and sublimates the former, it materially benefits the latter and conduces to

[21] *Ibid.*, CCCLXXII. 20: *Vācikaṁ mantra-jaypādi mānasaṁ rāga-varjanam,*
Śārīraṁ deva-pūjādi sarvadanto tridhā tapaḥ.

[22] *Bhāg.*, I. 2. 6: *Sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje.*
Ibid., I. 2. 19: *Na yujyamānayā bhaktyā bhagavaty akhilātmani,*
Sadṛśo'sti Śivaḥ panthā yogināṁ brahmasiddhaye.

[23] *Nar.*, XV. 58, 59: *Śiva eva Hariḥ sākṣāt, Harireva Śivaḥ svayam,*
Dvayor antaradṛg yāti narakam koṭiśaḥ khalaḥ.

[24] *Brahma*, CCXXV. 26, 27; 29. 17.

[25] *Bhāg.*, III. 25. 15: *Cetaḥ ..halv asya bandhāya muktaye cātmano matam.*

contentment and harmony in society allowing for a fair distribution of riches. The ideal *dāna* of the *sāttvika* type which is done in a spirit of duty and detachment is commended because it benefits the good and the needy. The *rajas* and the *tāmasa* types are condemned as they are performed for name and fame and in a haughty spirit. They only demoralize the giver. The *Padma Purāṇa*[26] classifies *dāna* into four types: *nitya*: consisting in the daily offering of gifts to the deserving in a spirit of duty without expecting any reward; *naimittika*: given to the learned on special occasions for expiating sins; *kāmya*: what is offered for obtaining material prosperity in the form of wealth and progeny; and *vimala*: the fourth and the best so called because it is pure being given to the enlightened in a spirit of dedication to the Lord. In a wider sense, *dāna* includes such philanthropic acts coming under *pūrta* such as digging wells, tanks, and canals and constructing parks, hospitals, and temples. Gifts and charitable acts lead one to heaven.[27] *Ātithya* (hospitality to guests) consisting in the gift of food is *dāna par excellence*.[28] The *Brahma Purāṇa* emphatically declares that the purpose of wealth is its proper distribution among the needy.[29] *Dāna* is practical ethics which promotes peace and harmony in society by favouring economic equilibrium.

Sādhāraṇa-dharma forms the basis of *svadharma* and prescribes the limit within which the latter is to be observed. Non-appropriation is a common duty. A person on whom religious sacrifice is ordained, should not, in performing it, appropriate another's property. The individual of a specific community, by doing his prescribed duties, serves not only his community but other communities also according to their needs and, thus, serves the whole society. Through specific duties each class should serve the common good. The ethics of *svadharma* does not countenance anti-social acts, for to cause damage to society is to lower one's own self.

Svadharma as comprehended in the scheme of *varṇa* and *āśrama-dharma* holds a prominent place in Purāṇic ethics. In the former, society is divided into four classes—Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra, each class being charged with specific duties. The basis of this division was the general mental make-up (*guṇas*) and the aptitude for doing certain types of work (*karma*) of each class.[30] And the purpose of this scheme was the creation of maximum efficiency, progress, harmony, and welfare in society. Each class as a rule, had to strive after maximum efficiency in discharging its duties without encroaching on the specific duties of other classes. Each class was

[26] *Pad.*, I. 57. 6-8; *Kūr.*, II. 26. 4-8.
[27] *Agni*, CCIX. 2.
[28] *Ibid.*, CCIX. 3.
[29] *Brahma*, CCXXIX. 73: *Tatha sadviniyogāya vijñeyam gahanam nṛṇām.*
[30] *B. G.*, IV. 13: *Cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ.*

considered as the best in its own field and as attaining the highest perfection by discharging its *dharma* conscientiously.[31] Thus each part of the social machinery was considered as important as any other, and all were expected to work smoothly helping one another and having in view the welfare of the whole society. The four *varṇas* could successfully discharge their functions (*karma*) only if they possessed certain characteristics (*guṇas*). A Brāhmaṇa should possess universal sympathy, forbearance, control of the senses, truthfulness, wisdom and knowledge of the Ātman.[32] The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes universal friendship and objective equanimity as the Brāhmaṇa's wealth.[33] Purity, penance, and faith in God are also ascribed to him in the *Gītā*.[34] His specific duties (*karma*) are study and teaching of the Vedas, performing and guiding the sacrifice, and giving and receiving gifts.[35] Vedic study, sacrifice and charity are enjoined on the Kṣatriya and Vaiśya also. The natural qualities of a Kṣatriya are heroism, smartness, fortitude, dexterity, lordship, and courage in battle. Wielding arms and protecting the earth by helping the good and chastising the wicked form his specific duties.[36] The specific duties of a Vaiśya are agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade.[37] Humility characterizes the Śūdra.[38] Selfless service is his motto. The Brāhmaṇa is the custodian of spiritual wisdom, the Kṣatriya of physical power, the Vaiśya of economic well-being and the Śūdra of industrial and fine arts. The *Brahma Purāṇa* mentions universal sympathy, patience, humility, truthfulness, purity, non-injury, sweet speech, friendship, and freedom from jealousy and avarice as the virtues to be developed by all the *varṇas*.[39]

The duties of a Kṣatriya and of the king mentioned in the Purāṇas are almost identical; for kings were generally Kṣatriyas. The *Agni Purāṇa* enjoins on the king the proper acquisition and distribution of wealth. He must not oppress the poor for achieving his personal ends, for they would turn their fatal fury against him. He should be well-versed in both the secular and moral sciences.[40] Unless he is self-controlled, he cannot control the subjects. He must employ each person in a task for which he is best fitted.[41] He must do such things as would ensure him

[31] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 45: *Sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṁsiddhim labhate naraḥ.*
[32] *Pad.*, I. 54. 25: *Kṣamā dayā ca vijñānam satyam caiva damaḥ śamaḥ,*
Adhyātma-nityatā jñānam etad brāhmaṇa-lakṣaṇam.
Bhāg., VII. 11. 21; *Bhāg.*, XLIV. 28.
[33] *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 24.
[34] *B. G.*, XVIII. 42.
[35] *Agni*, CLI. 7; *Vām.*, LXXIV. 44-47; *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 22-23; *Kūr.*, II. 38-39:
Yajañam yājanam dānam brāhmaṇasya parigrahaḥ,
Adhyāpanam ca'dhyayanam ṣaṭ karmāṇi dvijottamāḥ.
[36] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 6-10; *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 26-29; *B. G.*, XVIII. 43; *Agni*. CLI. 8.
[37] *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 30-31; *Kūr*, II. 39-40; *B. G.*, XVIII. 44; *Agni*, CLI. 9.
[38] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 16; *Viṣṇu*, III. 8. 37.
[39] *Agni*, CCXXXVIII; *Mat.*, CCXV. 55; *Mārk.*, XXIV.
[40] *Mat.*, CCXV. 83.

the love of his subjects and eschew those that offend them.[42] Since the Purāṇas deal with the ethics of *rāja-dharma*, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends the instruction of misguided princes through the Purāṇas and counts the *Paurāṇikas* among the court officials.[43] The ethics of *varṇa-dharma* lies in that each *varṇa* being a limb of society, should fulfil its specific duty to the best of its capacity in order to secure maximum progress, harmony, and welfare in society.

The *āśrama-dharmas* are specific duties to be performed by the aspirant after spiritual evolution within specific stages in his life. They are *brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprasthya*, and *sannyāsa*, during each of these stages one has to discharge the respective duties of a student, householder, recluse, and ascetic. These are like four halting stations on the path or like four rungs in the ladder leading to spiritual progress. The ordinary aspirant has to pass through these different stages. But one possessing extraordinary psychic powers might be able to dispense with the intermediate stages; but this step is abnormal and beset with difficulties. The scheme of *āśrama-dharma* takes human nature into consideration and prescribes the final stage of renunciation only after giving room for enjoying the good things of the world and for discharging one's social duties in a spirit of detachment during the preceding stages. Man's life becomes one of discipline, study, service, sacrifice, penance, and renunciation, all these leading to the perfection of human personality.

Brahmacarya is the period of study and discipline. During this stage, the student has to devote himself to Vedic study caring little for physical comforts. He must serve his *guru* and subsist on alms. His life should be characterized by purity, simplicity, agility, moderation, and endurance. By this the mind becomes alert and the body healthy and strong to shoulder the responsibilities of the next stage.[44]

Gārhasthya, householdership, is the most vital stage in life, as it offers the largest scope for service and sacrifice. All *āśramas* flow to rest in the householder. He is the refuge and the breath of life for those in the other stages of life. He should treat the whole world with love. He must eschew from his life contempt for others, egoism, pride, harshness, and injury to life.[45] The *gṛhastha* discharges his duties and befriends all creatures by performing the five daily sacrifices called *ṛṣi-yajña*, *pitṛ-yajña*, *deva-yajña*, *manuṣya-yajña*, and *bhūta-yajña* being meant for discharging

[42] *Ibid.*, CCXV. 98.

[43] V. 3. 6.

[44] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 22-27; *Kūr.*, II. 45; *Sk.*, IV. 1. 36.

[45] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 28-34; *Viṣṇu*, III. 9. 14-16; *Sk.*, III. 2. 6; *Manu*, III. 77; *Kūr.*, II. 42-3: *Agnayo'tithiśuśrūṣā yajño dānaṃ surārcanam,*
Gṛhasthasya samāsena dharmo'yam munipuṅgavāḥ.

one's debt to the ancient sages, gods, ancestors, men, and all creatures. All these sacrifices have an outward form and an inner meaning. *Ṛṣi-yajña* is also called *brahma-yajña* since it consists in the study and teaching of the Brāhmaṇas or the Vedas. Through this one is only discharging one's duty to the *ṛṣis*, some of them being the seers of Vedic hymns. It is based on the ethics that one should share one's knowledge with others. All study is a sacrifice since its fruit is meant for being given to others through teaching. This serves to preserve, promote, and propagate Vedic learning in society.

The gods are worshipped through *homa* or oblations in the fire. They are conceived as the active Intelligences of Nature who contribute to our welfare through rains etc. We repay their service by giving them a share in our possessions. By this we recognize the relation and interdependence between the physical and super-physical worlds.

Sacrifice to the ancestors consists in propitiating (*tarpaṇa*) them through the offering of water. This can be extended further to comprehend the rites and ceremonies which involve the giving of food, clothing and *dakṣiṇā* (useful presents) to the learned and needy Brāhmaṇas. These are termed *śrāddhas* being based on *śraddhā* (faith).[46] The ancestors when propitiated grant all desires like longevity, progeny, wealth, wisdom, and heaven.[47] The Purāṇas expatiate on the importance, method, varieties, and fruits of these *śrāddhas*. Their non-performance is an ingratitude and sin. Gratitude is a great virtue as it binds the world together. Ingratitude is the worst sin for it disintegrates, and disharmonizes society. The *śrāddhas* have both an ethical and economic aspect. Man expresses his gratitude to his ancestors who have bequeathed to him his physical and spiritual body. Since the gifts are to be given in the *śrāddha* to the poor and the enlightened, both the needy and the worthy section of the society is benefited.

Worship of men is hospitality to guests. Those belonging to the other *āśramas* who had no fixed abode and who went about in quest of knowledge and truth to centres of wisdom could find refuge only in the householder. He acted as their steward. By feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and comforting the distressed he promoted social harmony and welfare.

Bhūta-yajña consists in feeding the lives both visible and invisible

[46] *Bḍ.*, II. 42-3: *Deśe kāle ca pātre ca śraddhayā vidhinā ca yat,*
Pitṛn uddiśya viprebhyo dānam śrāddham udāhṛtam.

[47] *Agni*, CLXII; *Brahma*, CCXX. 118-20. *Śrāddhas* are described in *Viṣṇu*, III; *Brahma*, CCXVII, CCXIX, CCXX; *Vāyu*, LXXI-LXXXIII; *Nar.*, XXII-XXVIII; *Mārk.*, XXXVI-XLIII; *Var.*, XIII-XIV; *Mat.*, XVI-XXII; *Agni*, CXVII, CLXIII; *Kūr*, II. 20-23; *Gar.*, IXC, CCXVIII, CCXIX; *Sk.*, VI. 217-225.

around us. By this we discharge our duty towards the rest of creation. The individual is but a cell in the vast body of creation. All lives around him are part and parcel of the huge world-family. Man is bound to care for the life of even the smallest ant. His happiness can be secured only if it subserves the general happiness. The ethics of *bhūta-yajña* rests on the knowledge of the Ātman as immanent in all creatures. The Purāṇas have recognized life even in the plants. Hence rearing trees is considered a great virtue; cutting them is a great sin.[48] Thus the householder is able to render practical help to all from the highest *sannyāsin* to the lowest ant. He is an indispensable factor in social well-being.

Vānaprasthya or secluded life in the forest is a stage preparatory to the final stage of renunciation. This life is characterized by severe discipline in matters of food, dress, and other physical comforts. The aspirant's fare consists of leaves, roots, and fruits. The hair is left to grow. The bare ground serves as bed. Skin and *kuśa* grass serve as clothing. Heat and cold should not affect him. He has to bathe thrice a day, has to worship his favourite god and guests, and has to study and observe penance with perfect equanimity.[49] This is a stage of transition from the life of a householder to that of the *sannyāsin*; and it is a period of probation entitling one to enter a state of complete renunciation.

The fourth stage is that of the *sannyāsin*. Detachment from worldly objects entitles one to enter this stage. Kindness to all, freedom from desires and passions, and complete equanimity in pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and also sameness of attitude towards friend and foe, characterize this stage. The *sannyāsin* has to observe non-injury in thought, word, and deed.[50] The *Padma Purāṇa* speaks of *karma-sannyāsins, veda-sannyāsins*, and *jñāna-sannyāsins*. The first devotes himself to the performance of oblations in the sacred fire in a spirit of dedication to God. The second constantly practises the Vedas. The third who is considered superior to the others, is one whose mind is always rooted in the knowledge of the Ātman. The *sannyāsin* subsists on leaves and leads a life of peace, silence, and celibacy not expecting any reward and caring neither for life nor death.[51] He transcends the bonds of the flesh and rises into the realm of the Spirit. He might move from place to place not sticking to any place for more than a day, accepting the hospitality of the good, and disseminating spiritual wisdom both by example and precept.

The scheme of the *aśramas* is based on the ethical principle that man

[48] *Viṣṇu*, II. 6.
[49] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 39-44; *Viṣṇu*, III. 9. 22; *Pad.*, I. 58; *Kūr.*, II. 43; *Agni*, CLX. 1-5; *Sk.*, IV. 1. 36.
[50] *Brahma*, CCXXII. 46-54; *Viṣṇu*, III. 9. 27-31; *Kūr.*, II. 44; *Agni*, CLXI. 6-7.
[51] *Pad.*, I. 59. 3-10.

should discharge his duties fully before aspiring for liberation from the bonds of the flesh and the world. The path of duty is the way to glory. Before desiring to be absolved from the bonds of existence he has to absolve himself from the threefold debt he owes to the sages, gods, and ancestors. He does it by Vedic study, through sacrifices, and through progeny. The first two stages, *brahmacarya* and *gārhasthya* offer the aspirant ample scope for discharging these debts. And by discharging them he contributes to the progress of society in its intellectual, economic, and numerical aspects.

The theory of Karma and transmigration also plays a prominent and fundamental rôle in Purāṇic ethics. 'As a man sows, so he reaps' sums up the Karma theory. Any action good, bad, or indifferent, yields its corresponding fruit. The joys and sorrows of creatures in this life are predestined and determined by the nature of *karma* performed in a previous birth. Even the nature of the bodies taken by the Jīva is determined by the actions of a previous birth. Desire, thought, and physical action mutually interlinked form the three threads which are twisted into the cord of *karma*. These three threads have to be well-refined. Though *karma* plays a vital part in determining the life here, man is given the freedom to better his life here by doing good deeds for which he is given the discriminative power. This freedom of the individual is emphasized in the Purāṇas. This has an ethical value as it gives man an incentive to overcome fatalism and do good deeds.

It is declared that the *karma* of a previous birth seeks out its doer in this birth to yield the corresponding fruit just as the calf finds out its mother from among thousands of mother cows. Those with gentle nature are born as gods, saints, and philanthropists. The cruel and the heartless are born as men, beasts, birds, and reptiles of prey. This theory too has an ethical value, for no man would welcome rebirth in an inferior body. In this context the Purāṇas mention a number of hells to which the sinners go according to the nature of their sins.[52]

The doctrine of Karma and hell is a moral law which controls existence favouring morality and discouraging immorality. *Karma* is an ethical force which tends to improve the world by bringing its spiritual elements to perfection. In penalizing wrong and rewarding right it treats virtue as coincident with happiness.

Many Purāṇas[53] deal with expiation for the sins of omission and

[52] *Brahma*, CCXXI, CCXV, CCXXVII, CCXXXIII ; *Viṣṇu*, II. 6. 7-21 ; *Nār.*, XIV ; *Mārk.*, X-XLIV ; *Var.*, CXCIII-CCXII ; *Agni*, CCCLXVIII-CCCLXXX ; *Bṛhv.*, II. XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII.

[53] *Brahma*, XXII, CLXIV ; *Agni*, CLXIX-CLXXV ; Nār., XXII-XXVIII ; *Var.*, CXIX ; *Sk.*, I. 3. 2-6.

commission. It includes repentance and the performance of expiatory rites calculated to purify the mind. To err is human. Repentance is a virtue for it leads to the higher virtue of not committing a wrong again. The performance of expiatory rites relieves a person of the depressing thought that he is damned for ever, and makes him feel at ease to turn over a new leaf in his career.

A sin is considered as such because it is anti-social. It implies lack of self-restraint, a tendency to trespass into others' rights. Hence, theft, murder, adultery, envy, and avarice are considered sins. The sin of an individual adversely affects the whole society. By eschewing sin an individual is doing a duty both to himself and to the society.

The Purāṇas[54] also stress the need for fasting and observing certain *vratas* or religious rites. These have a great spiritual and ethical value. They discipline, purify, and sublimate the mind. Hence they are given a prominent place in the scheme of religious duties.

Purāṇic ethics is intensely practical and utilitarian. It takes into consideration the welfare of society as a whole and prescribes the caste and customary duties for the individual. The scheme of *varṇāśrama-dharma* has this end in view. While prescribing the practice of great virtues like self-discipline and renunciation as in the absolutist systems, it advocates their practice as far as they are practicable in consonance with *svadharma*. It is a synthesis of the ethical principles enunciated in the literature of the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Upaniṣads. The Vedic emphasis on truth, duty, and respect for superiors receives greater emphasis in the Purāṇas. The sacrificial cult of the Brāhmaṇa literature is merged in the scheme of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The Upaniṣadic conception of the immanent Soul is utilized here for inculcating equanimity, kindness, and love towards all the grades of creation. Moreover the Purāṇas attempt a *rapprochment* between the ritualistic ethics of Brāhmaṇism and the moralistic ethics of Buddhism, and Jainism. The sacrificial cult of the Brāhmaṇa literature appears here in a more popular and acceptable form in the form of the *pañca-mahā-yajñas*, *śrāddhas*, and other rites which eschew injury to and promote love for animal life. The scheme of *sādhāraṇa-dharma* lays down general ethical principles common to all ; and that of *svadharma* prescribes specific duties for the betterment and welfare of society. The common good of all is the supreme standard and law according to which virtues are to be determined. Purāṇic ethics shows how one should lead a normal life of duties and responsibilities, and yet be in peace and contentment, and in a state of equanimity and communion with God. The Bhakti cult is given

[54] *Brahma*, CCXXVII ; *Agni*, CLXXVI CC ; *Sk.*, II 4. 2-6 ; III 3 6, 8 ; *Brhv*, III. 4. 5.

a supreme place in the scheme of self-purification. The law of Karma and transmigration serves as a deterrent to evil, and promoter of good in society. The scheme of fasting and other *vratas* helps to discipline and purify the mind. The system of religious ceremonies like *śrāddhas* enables the individual to discharge his obligations in a spirit of detachment and to contribute to the balance of social economy. The expiatory rites for the sins of omission and commission serve to rectify wrongs, to purify the mind, and thus to point out the right path of duty. Thus Purāṇic ethics, besides synthesizing the earlier ethics of the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Upaniṣads has embraced the ethics of Buddhism and Jainism also without detriment to the ethics of the earlier literature. It is highly practical and utilitarian.

PART IV

THE DHARMA-ŚĀSTRAS

THE DHARMA-SŪTRAS AND THE DHARMA-ŚĀSTRAS

INTRODUCTION

THE Vedas are the repositories of Hindu culture. They explain mainly *dharma* and *mokṣa*—the two great objects of human life (*puruṣārtha*). Every true Hindu believes in the practice of his *dharma* (duty), which will enable him to live a happy, noble, and moral life, and finally attain liberation (*mokṣa*) through self-knowledge. Next to the Vedas, the six Vedāṅgas and the Smṛtis are the sources of, and authorities on *dharma* in that they not only explain the Vedic texts but also form a supplement to them by systematically arranging the *dharmas* scattered over the different recensions of the Vedas.[1] One of the Vedāṅgas is Kalpa-Sūtra, which has three sections, Śrauta, Gṛhya, and Dharma. The Śrauta-Sūtras deal with performance of the Vedic rites.

The Gṛhya-Sūtras treat of the numerous ceremonies applicable to the domestic life of a man and his family from birth to death. The performance of the *gṛhya* rituals requires only the domestic fire (*āvasathya*) and not the three fires, *tretāgni*, required for a *śrauta* sacrifice. It describes nearly forty consecrations (*saṁskāras*) which are to be performed at different important periods of a man's life, beginning with *garbhādhāna* (conception). The first eighteen, ending with marriage, are bodily sacraments such as *garbhādhāna, puṁsavana* (ceremony for having a male issue), *sīmantonnayana, jātakarman* (birth ceremony), *nāmakaraṇa* (naming), *annaprāśana* (first feeding of rice), *caula, upanayana* (the holy thread ceremony), *samāvartana* (graduation), *vivāha* (marriage). Among others may be mentioned the five *mahā-yajñas* (great sacrifices)—*brahma-yajña, deva-yajña, pitṛ-yajña, bhūta-yajña,* and *manuṣya-yajña,* daily morning and evening worship, the new-moon and full-moon sacrifices, the annual *śrāddha,* ceremonies connected with house-building, cattle-breeding and farming, and a few magic rites to ward off evils, diseases, etc. Thus the Gṛhya-Sūtras afford us a deep insight into the life of ancient India. In short, they may be called the 'folklore journal' of ancient India.[2]

Equally important are the Dharma-Sūtras, directly connected with the Gṛhya-Sūtras and dealing with *dharma,* which means 'right, duty, law,

[1] Cf. *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra,* II. 4. 2.
[2] Cf. Winternitz, *HIL,* I. pp. 272-4.

religion, custom, and usage.' Therefore they deal with both secular and religious laws, which indeed are inseparable in India. Many of them are supplementary texts to the Śrauta- and Gṛhya-Sūtras and originated in the Vedic schools. A few Dharma-Sūtras, like that of the *Gautama,* are not parts of Kalpa-Sūtras, but independent works, just like the metrical Dharma-śāstras, such as the *Manu Smṛti.*

The important contents of the Dharma-Sūtras may be briefly noted here. They are: the sources of *dharma*—the Vedas, the Smṛtis, and the time-honoured practices of the great; the duties of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*; various moral *saṁskāras* of man, like *upanayana* and marriage according to the different castes; the avocations of the four *varṇas* in life; the duties and responsibilities of the king, rules for taxation, ownership, guardianship, witnesses, money-lending, payment of debts and deposits, punishments for the various crimes, partition, inheritance, and different kinds of sons; impurities of birth, death, and other causes; different kinds of *śrāddhas*, rules about food, duties of women and their property, *niyoga* (levirate) and its conditions; and sins and their expiations, and penances and their conditions. The Dharma-śāstras or Smṛtis also deal with these topics in a more analytical and systematized form under three main heads: *ācāra* (rites), *vyavahāra* (dealings), and *prāyaścitta* (expiation).

THE DHARMA-SŪTRAS

The chronology of the Dharma-Sūtras and the Dharma-śāstras or Smṛtis is still an unsettled question. It is, however, held by a few western scholars that the Dharma-Sūtras are earlier than, and perhaps, the sources of the metrical codes. But since Manu and his extant Smṛti and a few others are found cited by many Dharma-Sūtras, it is very difficult to maintain that all metrical Smṛtis are evolved from the Dharma-Sūtras. On the other hand, it can be asserted that both kinds of texts in the form of *sūtras* and verses, which were equally popular during that period, have developed side by side, with the result that many Dharma-Sūtra texts have also incorporated verses in *anuṣṭubh* and sometimes in other metres also.

The *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra* is believed to be the earliest among the Dharma-Sūtras available. Since it is specially studied by the Chandogas, it is conjectured that it belongs to the *Sāma-Veda* (Rāṇāyanīya school). It has twenty-eight chapters and deals with almost every topic exhaustively. Its treatment of marriage of eight kinds and of subcastes by *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriage (in which the wife is respectively of inferior or superior caste) in Chapter IV is noteworthy. It allows *niyoga* under certain conditions as stated in Chapter XVIII. Like Manu, Gautama recognizes

twelve sons in Chapter XXVIII. Baudhāyana,[3] Āpastamba,[4] Vasiṣṭha,[5] and Yājñavalkya[6] presuppose Manu. His earliest limit is decided by his *sūtras* in Chapter XXVI, which is based on the *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa* and by *sūtra* II. 28, which is probably a reminiscence of *Nirukta*, II. 3. Hence this Sūtra is approximately placed between 600 and 300 B.C.

The *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*, which forms the supplementary section of the *Āpastamba Śrauta-* and *Gṛhya-Sūtras* (being *praśnas* or questions 28 and 29 of the *Āpastamba Kalpa-Sūtra*), belongs to the *Taittirīya* recension of the *Black Yajur-Veda*. It is possible to maintain that the authors of the Śrauta-, Gṛhya-, and Dharma-Sūtras are the same, though a few scholars hold the view that the author of the Śrauta-Sūtra is different from that of the others. The *Āpastamba Gṛhya-* and *Dharma-Sūtras* are closely related to each other. They are very brief, and what one has explained is at times omitted by the other. The *Dharma-Sūtra* in II. 5-11, 15 and 16 tells us that the bride to be married must not be a *sagotra* (of the same clan) or a *sapiṇḍa* (a certain degree of consanguinity); the Gṛhya-Sūtra is silent on the point. Some Dharma-Sūtras are identical with the Gṛhya-Sūtras,[7] and sometimes they refer to each other.

Āpastamba quotes several authors and works on *dharma*. Besides the Vedic texts and the Vedāṅgas, Kaṇva, Kāṇva, Kauśika, Kautsa, Puṣkarasādi, Vārṣyāyaṇi, Śvetaketu, and Hārīta are mentioned. Though there is close similarity between the *Baudhāyana* and the *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtras*, they differ on several points. Baudhāyana (along with Gautama and Vasiṣṭha) mentions several secondary sons while Āpastamba is silent on them. Baudhāyana and others like Gautama approve of the practice of *niyoga* (levirate), which Āpastamba condemns. Baudhāyana (following Gautama) recognizes eight forms of marriage, of which Āpastamba mentions six only, omitting *prājāpatya* and *paiśāca*. Baudhāyana allows a large share to the eldest son on partition, of which Āpastamba does not approve. Baudhāyana allows *upanayana* to Rathakāras, while Āpastamba is silent on it. He refers to the views of 'a few' people, of whom one might be Gautama.[8]

[3] Cf. *Gaut Dh. S.* III. 25-34 with *Baud Dh. S.* II. 6. 17;
III. 35 „ , II. 6. 29;
XV. 29 „ , II. 8. 2;
XXIII. 8-10 „ , II. 1. 12-14;
XXIV. 2 „ II. 3. 8.

[4] Cf. *Gaut Dh. S.* with *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 6. 15. 25.

[5] Cf. *Gaut. Dh. S.* IV. 34 with *Vas. Dh. S.* IV. 34, and XIX with XXII.

[6] Yājñavalkya mentions Gautama as an author on *dharma* (I. 5).

[7] Cf. *Āp. Dh. S.* I. 1. 2. 38 with *Āp. Gṛ. S.* IV. 11. 15 and 16.

[8] Cf. *Āp. Dh. S.* I. 1. 2. 38 with *Gaut. Dh. S.* I. 23;
I. 1. 2. 41 „ „ I. 19;
I. 2. 5. 20 „ „ I. 54-59.

Again this *Dharma-Sūtra* contains many *sūtras* similar to those in Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā.[9] Āpastamba is assigned to a period between 500 and 300 B.C.[10]

The *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra* belongs to the *Black Yajur-Veda*. It is the supplementary portion of the *Baudhāyana Śrauta-* and *Gṛhya-Sūtras*,[11] and presupposes the *Baudhāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*. A *pravacanakāra* Kaṇva Bodhāyana is mentioned in the *Baudhāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra*[12] along with *padakāra* Ātreya, *vṛttikāra* Kauṇḍinya, and *sūtrakāra* Āpastamba. *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*[13] mentions Kaṇva Bodhāyana, *sūtrakāra* Āpastamba, and *satyāṣāḍha* Hiraṇyakeśin one after another (in libation offered to sages—*ṛṣi-tarpaṇa*). The author of the *Baudhāyana Gṛhya-* and *Dharma-Sūtras* is known as Baudhāyana and, as such, might be a descendant of this Kaṇva Bodhāyana. The commentator Govinda Svāmin explains Baudhāyana in *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra* I. 3. 13 as Kāṇvāyana. Just as Bhṛgu, one of the disciples of Manu, has compiled the well-known views of Manu in the extant *Manu Smṛti*, a later Baudhāyana might have compiled the views of Kaṇva Bodhāyana in the extant *Dharma-Sūtra*.

This Dharma-Sūtra has four *praśnas* with subdivisions into *adhyāyas* or *kaṇḍikās*. The authenticity of the text is doubted by many people. Govinda Svāmin says in his commentary on Sūtra I. 2. 19, that the author does not care for brevity. All the *sūtras* appear to be very loose in structure, and several subjects are treated without any logical connection. It is full of interpolations also.[14]

The *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra* mentions the four Vedas, one Aupajaṅghani, Kāśyapa, Gautama Prajāpati, Manu, and Maudgalya. The earliest reference to the *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*[15] might be found in Śabara Svāmin's commentary on the *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, I. 3. 3. In several places, Baudhāyana states 'others' views' which he does not subscribe to and then gives his own views. The date of this Sūtra is fixed between 500 and 200 B.C.

The *Hārīta Dharma-Sūtra*[16] contains thirty chapters. It possesses some quotations from some ancient works. Hārīta is quoted by Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, and Vasiṣṭha, and is believed to have belonged to the *Yajur-Veda*. It is said that the citations in Hārīta have much correspondence with *Maitrāyaṇīya-pariśiṣṭa* and *Mānavaśrāddhakalpa*. He refers to all the Vedas,

[9] *Āp. Dh. S.* I. 1. 4. 8, I. 4. 12. 11, II. 4. 8. 13, and I. 4. 12. 9 correspond to *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā Sūtra* I. 3. 3, IV. 1. 2, I. 3. 11-14, and XII. 3. 19 respectively.

[10] Kane, *H. Dh.*, I. p. 45.

[11] *Baudh. Dh. S.* II. 8. 20, and I. 2. 16 refer to *Baudh. Gṛ. S.* II. 11. 42 and II 5. 66 respectively.—*H. Dh.*, I. p. 10 n 54.

[12] III. 9. 6.

[13] II. 5. 27.

[14] *H. Dh.*, I. p. 23.

[15] I. 21.

[16] There is a paper manuscript in Travancore University Manuscripts Library which contains the Sūtra text in 30 chapters. It is full of scriptoral errors.

Vedāṅgas, Dharma-śāstras, metaphysics, and the customs and practices (*sthiti*) as *śrutas* (sources of *dharma*). He speaks of eight kinds of marriages, two of which are *kṣātra* and *mānuṣa* instead of *ārṣa* and *prājāpatya*. He mentions two kinds of women, *brahmavādinī* (*nun*) and *sadyovadhū* (newly wed), of whom the former is entitled to have *upanayana*, consecration of fire, the study of the Vedas, and begging alms in her own house. He looks down upon the profession of an actor and forbids the employment of a Brāhmaṇa actor in a *śrāddha*.

Hārīta might have flourished before Baudhāyana and Āpastamba, since they mention him, and therefore he can be assigned to a period between 600 and 300 B.C. The two metrical Smṛtis known as *Laghu-Hārīta* and *Vṛddha-Hārīta*, undoubtedly of different authorship, must have been completed at a later period in the post-Christian era.

The *Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra* is not a part of a Kalpa-Sūtra. It has thirty chapters. It is generally studied by the Ṛg-Vedins according to Kumārila, but is considered to be an authority by other school's also. It quotes the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Taittirīya* and *Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitās*, and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the *Yajur-Veda*. It resembles the *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra* in style and possesses many *sūtras* similar to those of Gautama and Baudhāyana. Like the *Dharma-Sūtra* of Baudhāyana, it has many interpolations, no doubt made at a very early age. It has quotations from the *Manu Smṛti* and adaptations in prose; and these prose adaptations are considered by Dr. Bühler and others to have been taken from an ancient work, *Mānava Dharma-Sūtra*, which they consider as more ancient than the metrical *Manu Smṛti*. P. V. Kane discusses this point at length and comes to the conclusion that there was no work called *Mānava Dharma-Sūtra* in existence and that all prose quotations from Manu in the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sutra* and other later works are only prose adaptations of the verses of the *Manu Smṛti* by later writers.[17]

Just as Vasiṣṭha quotes Manu, Manu also quotes Vasiṣṭha. This problem can be solved by the supposition that both texts had later additions, and that these extant works might be compilations of the views of the original Vasiṣṭha and Manu, by some latter-day followers of those schools. Both Manu and Vasiṣṭha are known as ancient writers on *dharma*. Most of the later Nibandhas quote from the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra*. Vasiṣṭha allows *niyoga* (levirate) and the remarriage of child-widows. He mentions only six forms of marriage: *brāhma, daiva, ārṣa, gāndharva, kṣātra*, and *mānuṣa*. His views are in some places different from those of Gautama, Baudhāyana, and other writers. He prohibits a Brāhmaṇa's marriage with a Śūdra woman. His Sūtra is generally assigned to a period between 300 and 100 B.C.[18]

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[17] *H. Dh.*, I. pp. 55. 56, 79-85.

Among the writers of Dharma-Sūtras, Śaṅkha and Likhita have been enjoying a very high position from early times. They have been mentioned as brothers in the *Mahābhārata* and as writers on *dharma* in the *Yogī-Yājñavalkya.* According to the *Parāśara Smṛti*, the codes of Manu, Gautama, Śaṅkha-Likhita, and Parāśara are of paramount authority on *dharma* in the four *yugas, kṛta, tretā, dvāpara,* and *kali,* respectively. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa mentions Śaṅkha and Likhita as belonging to the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* (of the *White Yajur-Veda*). The Sūtra text ascribed to these two writers is in both prose and verse. P. V. Kane has published a reconstructed text of the Sūtra.[19] Jīvānanda and Ānandāśrama collections of Smṛtis contain the metrical versions of *Śaṅkha-Likhita Smṛtis,* which are evidently later compilations. Between the Sūtra text and the metrical versions there are differences on several points. The Sūtra version allows a Brāhmaṇa to marry from the four castes, while the metrical text allows him to marry in the first three castes only; and this difference indicates the influence of a few later Sūtras and Smṛtis which condemn a Brāhmaṇa's marriage with a Śūdra woman. The Sūtra text resembles other Sūtras in style and the *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* in particular. It agrees closely with the texts of Gautama and Baudhāyana. Like Baudhāyana and a few others, Śaṅkha-Likhita quote themselves among the *dharmaśāstrakāras.* They allow *niyoga,* but do not favour the claim of females to succeed males. They follow Āpastamba on several points, and on partition and inheritance they give more details than Āpastamba and Baudhāyana. Though they quote Yājñavalkya, who also quotes them in his turn, it is believed that this Sūtra is earlier than the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* which is placed in a later period, i.e. in the beginning of the Christian era.[20]

The *Viṣṇu Dharma-Sūtra* is peculiar in its origin in that it professes its revelation by the Divine Boar (Viṣṇu). It belongs to the Kaṭha school of the *Yajur-Veda* and has a hundred chapters in mixed prose and verse, of which four, viz. 21, 67, 73, and 86 are in common with those of the *Kāṭhaka Gṛhya* popular in Kashmir.

This work has a few chapters (viz. 3 and 5 on *rāja-dharma* and punishment; 15 and 16 on the rules about the twelve sons and the mixed castes; and 21 and 22 on funeral rites) which are comparatively old and stand on a level with the *sūtras* of Gautama and Āpastamba. It contains nearly a hundred and sixty verses of the extant *Manu Smṛti* and also many *sūtras* which may be the prose adaptations of the verses of Manu and Yājñavalkya. A few verses of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are also found. Though Yājñavalkya mentions Viṣṇu among the authors of treatises on *dharma,* the extant *Viṣṇu Dharma-Sūtra* is a later production. It is curious that Kumārila has not mentioned Viṣṇu, though later Nibandhas quote this Sūtra. The date of

[19] *ABORI,* VII.-VIII.

[20] *H. Dh.,* I. p. 78.

the older portions of this Sūtra may be fixed between 300 and 100 B.C. It allows a Brāhmaṇa to marry from the four castes and does not inveigh *niyoga*, as Manu and others do. It advocates specially the worship of Vāsudeva.[21]

The *Hiraṇyakeśi Dharma-Sūtra* forms the 26th and 27th *praśnas* of the *Hiraṇyakeśi Kalpa-Sūtra*, which has no independent existence in that it has borrowed almost all its *sūtras* from the *Āpastamba Śrauta-* and *Dharma-Sūtras* and the *Bhāradvāja Gṛhya-Sūtra*. The contents of the *Hiraṇyakeśi Dharma-Sūtra* are, therefore, practically the same as those of the *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*. The only difference is that one *sūtra* of Āpastamba is sometimes split up into many and presented in grammatically more correct language than the original, which is in many cases not adhering to Pāṇini. The arrangement of the *sūtras* also is different.

The Hiraṇyakeśins form a Sūtracaraṇa of the Khāṇḍikeya section of the Taittirīya-śākhā and were formed later than the Āpastamba school. They were the occupants of the region between the Sahya Mountain and the ocean and near Paraśurāma (i.e. in Konkan). There are at present many Hiraṇyakeśins in Ratnagiri District.[22]

The *Vaikhānasa Dharma-Sūtra*[23] by Vaikhānasa is an authority on the duties of *vānaprasthas*. Manu,[24] Gautama,[25] Baudhāyana,[26] and Vasiṣṭha mention Vaikhānasa. It has four *praśnas*. It gives four kinds of *brahmacārins*, four kinds of householders—*vārtā-vṛtti*, *śālīna*, *yāyāvara*, and *ghoracārika*, two kinds of *vānaprasthas*—*sapatnīka* and *apatnīka* with their further sub-divisions, and four kinds of *sannyāsins*. From its style it appears to be a later production by a devotee of Nārāyaṇa. Dr. Bühler speaks of a *Vaikhānasa Gṛhya-Sūtra* in seven *praśnas*.

The *Auśanasa Dharma-Sūtra* in seven chapters deals mainly with the duties of the four castes. It is both in prose and verse, some of the verses being found in the *Manu Smṛti*. It refers to Vasiṣṭha, Hārīta, Śaunaka, and Gautama. From the later Nibandha works like the *Smṛticandrikā* and Haradatta's commentary on the *Gautama Dharma-Sūtra*, the *Auśanasa Dharma-Sūtra* is supposed to have dealt with all topics—*ācāra*, *vyavahāra*, and *prāyaścitta*. Kauṭilya quotes it several times. He speaks of the Auśanasa method of partition in allowing one-tenth as an additional share to the eldest son. The *Mahābhārata* also refers to a work on politics by Uśanas. Later works like the *Nīti-prakāśikā*, *Mudrā-rākṣasa*, and the commentaries on the Smṛtis of Manu and Yājñavalkya mention the Auśanasa system of politics, which is yet to be unearthed.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[23] An English translation of the text with a critical Introduction is published by K. Rangachari in Ramanujachari Oriental Institute Publication, Vol. III.
[24] VI. 21. [25] III. 2. [26] II. 6. 17.

The *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra,* though mainly a work on Indian polity, contains discussions on *dharma* in one of its sections called *Dharmasthīya,* which deals with *vyavahāra* in detail. Like Manu, Kauṭilya mentions eighteen *vyavahāra-padas,* but with some modification. Manu[27] says that the son of the first three castes by a Śūdra woman does not inherit the father's property, while Kauṭilya allows him a share, when there are sons to the father by the higher caste wives, or one third when he has no other son.[28] Manu prohibits the remarriage of widows,[29] while Kauṭilya allows not only widows to remarry but also wives whose husbands' whereabouts are not known for a particular period.[30] Kauṭilya allows a wife to desert her husband, if the latter is of a bad character, has become a traitor to the king, endangers her life, or has become an outcaste or impotent.[31] Kauṭilya even allows divorce (unknown to any other law-giver), but he bases it only on the ground of mutual hatred and says that a marriage in the approved forms cannot be dissolved.[32] Manu condemns gambling, which Kauṭilya allows under state control for the purpose of detecting thieves. On the question as to the person to whom the *kṣetraja* son belongs to, whether to the begetter or to the husband of the mother of the child, Kauṭilya quotes the views of the *ācāryas* that it belongs to the husband of the mother of the child, next mentions the view that it belongs to the begetter, and then gives his own view that it belongs to both.[33] Kauṭilya's date is generally assigned to the third century B.C., though some hold that it cannot be earlier than 100 B.C.[34]

Besides the writers of Dharma-Sūtras mentioned above, there were many more, such as Atri, Kāṇva, Kāśyapa, Devala, Paiṭhīnasi, Gārgya, Cyavana, Jātukarṇya, Bhāradvāja, Śātātapa, and Sumantu, whose works dealt with all topics of *dharma.*

THE DHARMA-ŚĀSTRAS

The term *dharma-śāstra* is generally applicable to both the Dharma-Sūtras and the metrical codes, otherwise known as Smṛtis. The term *smṛti* indicates that these codes are authorities on the basis of Śruti, which is considered a revelation (*pratyakṣa*) from which *smṛti* (remembrance) arose.

Side by side with the comparatively late Dharma-Sūtras, metrical Dharma-śāstras of varied lengths came to be composed with the growing demand of Hindu society for new provisions in matters of *dharma,* religious and secular. Of these works, which were very numerous, only those of Manu and Yājñavalkya, and a few others deserve special notice here.

[27] IX. 155.
[28] III. 4.
[29] V. 161-5.
[30] III. 7.
[31] III. 6.
[32] III.2 (last verse).
[33] III. 3.
[34] *H. Dh.,* I. p. 99.

The *Manu Smṛti* is the most ancient and authoritative among the extant metrical works on *dharma*. It has twelve chapters dealing with *ācāra, vyavahāra,* and *prāyaścitta*. It is popularly said that Manu's statement is healthy and acceptable, and consequently his book is looked upon as having served as a model to all later Smṛtis. It has many masterly commentaries like those of Medhātithi, Govindarāja, and Kullūka Bhaṭṭa. The extant work is a version compiled by Bhṛgu, one of the disciples of Manu. The Smṛtis of Nārada, Bṛhaspati, and Kātyāyana, however, make us believe that there was another version different from the extant *Manu Smṛti*.

The work which is next in importance to the *Manu Smṛti* is that of Yājñavalkya, which has three *kāṇḍas* (sections) on *ācāra, vyavahāra,* and *prāyaścitta*. It agrees with the *Manu Smṛti* on many points, but disagrees in important topics like *niyoga*, inheritance, and gambling. It belongs to the Vājasaneya school, and it paraphrases the ideas contained in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and *Pāraskara Gṛhya-Sūtra*, both belonging to the *White Yajur-Veda*. The text of this Smṛti also has undergone many modifications. It has got a few valuable commentaries like *Bālakrīḍā, Aparārka,* and *Mitākṣarā*, of which *Mitākṣarā* is the best and most critical and authoritative.

The *Parāśara Smṛti* is noted for its advanced views and it is considered most suited for the *kaliyuga*. It deals with *ācāra* and *prāyaścitta* only. It mentions the *āpaddharma* of the four castes: agriculture, trade, and commerce for the Brāhmaṇas, etc. Its commentary by Mādhavācārya is very popular and authoritative and explains *vyavahāra* under *rāja-dharma*.

The *Nārada Smṛti* occurs in two recensions a shorter and a longer, and deals with *vyavahāra* only. It closely follows Manu, but introduces a few innovations in the eighteen titles of law and permits *niyoga*, remarriage of women, and gambling under certain conditions.

The *Bṛhaspati Smṛti*,[35] as reconstructed by Professor K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, has seven sections dealing with *vyavahāra, ācāra,* (*saṁskāra; śrāddha, āśauca,* and *āpaddharma*), and *prāyaścitta*. It is mostly in verse but has a few prose passages also. It closely follows the *Manu Smṛti* (both Svāyambhuva and Bhṛgu versions) and is known as a *vārttika* (metrical gloss) of and a *pariśiṣṭa* (supplement) to *Manu Smṛti*. Like Manu, Bṛhaspati is against *niyoga*. He divides the eighteen titles of law into two groups, fourteen under civil (*dhanamūla*) and four under criminal; and treats of nine ordeals (*divya*).

The *vyavahāra* section of the *Kātyāyana Smṛti* has been reconstructed

[35] Published in Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Vol. LXXXV, 1941.

by P. V. Kane.[36] It follows closely the works of Manu, Bṛhaspati, Nārada, and Kauṭilya. It specially deals with *strīdhana* (a woman's personal property). Like Nārada, Yājñavalkya, and Kauṭilya, and some *dharma sūtrakāras* like Baudhāyana and Gautama, Kātyāyana allows *niyoga* under certain conditions.

Among others mention may be made of the Smṛtis of Aṅgiras, Dakṣa, Pitāmaha, Prajāpati, Marīci, Yama, Viśvāmitra, Vyāsa, Saṅgrahakāra, and Saṁvarta, who are known from citations in later Nibandhas as writers on *dharma*; a few of their works, some being abridgements only, are found in Jīvānanda and Ānandāśrama collections.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing account, it will be clear that all these Dharma-Sūtras and Smṛtis specially emphasize the practice of *dharma* on the part of every Hindu for his material, moral, and spiritual edification and happiness. They presume the existence of the caste system and its division into four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. They also believe in the doctrine of Karma, which is the corner-stone of Hindu religion and philosophy. According to it, there is distinction between the soul and body in that the one is imperishable and the other perishable. Man has a long chain of births and deaths, and assumes a particular body in every birth on the basis of his past *karma*. In every birth he is bound to do a good number of actions, since he cannot remain idle even if he chooses to be. He is instructed by these Dharma-Sūtras to do his prescribed duties according to his *varṇa* and *āśrama*, of which some are obligatory and of high disciplinary value. He is directed to do *sāttvika dharma* and penance even to control his passions and to attain the mental power of concentration and meditation. In the *Gītā*, the Lord says that He incarnates Himself in order to protect *dharma* when it becomes corrupt and annihilate *adharma* when it prevails everywhere. He exhorts Arjuna to conquer his passions and impulses, and perform his appointed duty (*svadharma*) as a born Kṣatriya, viz. to fight with his enemies whoever they may be, and insinuates that his resolution not to fight is foolish. It does not imply that the Lord has completely denied freedom of the will or Arjuna's personal ability to make a deliberate choice of his own between the two alternatives, whether to fight or not to fight. The Karma theory implies that man can by his own action influence his future. The Dharma-Sūtras clearly emphasize also the individual's freedom to regulate his conduct by his own rational volitions and his ability to conquer his own impulses when they become obstacles to his future

[36] Published in the *Hindu Law Quarterly*, Bombay, 1933.

happiness. The doctrine of Karma is not fatalism, which paralyses all human efforts and is inimical to moral progress. Sage Yājñavalkya says that the fruition of an act depends upon human effort and the favourable factors created by a man's own previous actions. The greatness of *karma* is again emphasized by the fact that rewards or punishments are the results of *karma*, though they are supervised and controlled by one supreme force, God, Who is described in Hindu scriptures as the Creator, Protector, and Destroyer of this world. So man through his actions is mainly responsible for his happiness or misery. If he does the duty prescribed to him, he will be rewarded for it; but if he does not practise it and does something else, he is doomed.[37]

The Dharma-Sūtras and Smṛtis, which explain the duties of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*, take a more commonsense view of the duties of man and even object to the pursuit of *mokṣa* (liberation) without previously discharging one's duty to the world. Manu and several others hold that the successive adoption of the four *āśramas* is more in accordance with the natural course of a man's life, that is, the first part, *brahmacarya*, is entirely devoted to education; the second, *gārhasthya*, to marriage and discharge of his duty to society and to the pursuit of wealth by the exercise of some lawful calling or occupation; the third, to retirement from active life and adoption of the life of a recluse in the forest for the practice of meditation; and lastly to entering the fourth *āśrama*, *sannyāsa*, by completely resigning from this world. A careful study of these Hindu codes, Dharma-Sūtras and Smṛtis, will be, no doubt, a great and inexhaustible source of inspiration and moral strength to every Hindu, male or female, whatever may be his or her occupation in life.

[37] *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, Ch. IX.

20

THE SMṚTIS: THEIR OUTLOOK AND IDEALS[1]

SMṚTI

THE word *smṛti* means memory or recollection of what was previously cognized; and the Smṛti works are the recorded recollections of those great sages who had deeply studied the Vedas and mastered their precepts —their injunctions as well as their prohibitions. The Vedas are *apauruṣeya*, not man-made, and are therefore self-authoritative, needing no external support. The Smṛtis, on the other hand, are man-made; yet they are authoritative, only because they come from men with profound knowledge of the Vedas. In the phrase *smṛti-śīle ca tadvidām*, meaning 'the recollection and conduct of those who are conversant with those, i.e. the Vedas', the significance of '*tadvidām*' is that the validity of the Smṛtis depends on the conformity of their ideas to the Vedic precepts. Where the Vedic texts supposed to underlie a Smṛti usage are not to be found, it is presumed that such texts must once have existed.

On a conflict between two Vedic texts, an option is indicated, as both are equally authoritative, but in case of contradiction between a Vedic text and a Smṛti, the Vedic text prevails. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa is of the opinion that the latter is really a conflict between two Vedic texts, one express and the other presumed, and that an express text prevails over a presumed one.

ĀCĀRA

Ācāra (custom) comes next in order of authority. It should not prevail over the Vedas or the Smṛtis, and that is the theory which has explicit support of many of the Smṛti works. But in practice *ācāra* has prevailed over every other authority of *dharma*, and the courts of justice now uniformly maintain that custom supersedes all law. This is not without support in the Smṛtis themselves. Baudhāyana, for example, mentions five prohibited practices of the South and five of the North, and says that they are valid in their respective areas, but not elsewhere. He immediately adds that Gautama dissents. Gautama's view is the orthodox theory, but Baudhāyana follows advancing practice.

That *ācāra* should have prevailed over Smṛti is not surprising, since *ācāra* is a response to changed or changing circumstances, while the Smṛti satisfied the needs of an earlier time.

[1] Some of the ideas discussed in this chapter interpretatively are dealt with in chapter XXIV and XXXV more descriptively.

INTERPRETATION OF CONFLICTING TEXTS

The Smṛtis are many, some being in the *sūtra* form and others metrical. Pāṇini's *sūtras* are cryptic, mnemonic, and unintelligible until explained with reference to the *saṁjñā-prakaraṇa.* The Dharma-Sūtras are not cryptic and unintelligible, but are aphoristic, pithy and clear, requiring assistance only to reconcile them with the other *sūtras.*

That a dissenting opinion exists in the Smṛti is expressed by such words as 'Some say', 'Gautama, however, says', 'Manu says this, but that is not my opinion', 'On this subject this opinion is Atri's, this is Śaunaka's, and this is Bhṛgu's', and so on. In such cases there is an *ekavākyatā* rule, which means that we should look upon them as the view of one writer and so reconcile differences in that light. They are in many cases irreconcilable, but different scope is sought to be given to the different rules, and, if possible, one should act so as not to contravene any text.

An illustration may be given here. One text says that marriages can be celebrated in all the months of the year. Another says that *uttarāyaṇa* or the northern course of the sun is the proper season for marriages. According to a third authority, the months of Prauṣṭhapada and Mārgaśīrṣa are not good for the purpose. The reconciler says that first marriage may wait for *uttarāyaṇa,* but widowers should not be *anāśramīs* (unattached to any religious order) which they will be before another marriage, and they should hurry into marriage even in *dakṣiṇāyana,* avoiding the two months pronounced inauspicious. No opinion is flouted by the solution.

There is a science of exegesis developed by the Mīmāṁsakas which has received acceptance from all schools of thought in ancient India and has application even in the sphere of law. Some of the Mīmāṁsā rules find a place in the Smṛtis themselves. They have been found to compare favourably with the rules of interpretation in modern statutes.

SMṚTIS AND INDIANS: HINDUS AND NON-HINDUS

As norms of conduct, the Smṛtis governed all Indians at one time. All were then counted as Hindus—one people. There was no hardship, as local customs superseded all laws. Early Christianity required only Christian faith, but left Christians to their own laws and social usages then observed. But Christianity has now developed ways of altering the usages and laws of inheritance etc. Islam, as a religion, had its laws of inheritance and rules of behaviour. In spite of these, many Muslim communities followed the Hindu Law of Inheritance till very recently, when Muslim Law was imposed on all Muslims with great zeal. There are the Jews and the Parsis, divided from the Indian Aryan by an ancient misunderstanding, but reunited for centuries by a common brotherhood in a common motherland. If a

composite culture should ever emerge in India, much that belongs to this ancient land will be found in it, Aryan and pre-Aryan.

There are other groups also which may claim to be outside Hinduism. But they are much nearer to the Hindus than any of the above. The Buddhists, the Jains, and the Brāhmos are already treated in some respects as belonging to the fold of Hinduism and cannot well disclaim interest in Hindu culture.

The remaining population with all its diversity is classified as 'Hindu'. Generally speaking, the Smṛtis govern them all, as has been already said, subject to custom. They, in the main, are of 'Aryan' origin and have pre-Aryan roots. The later developments have occurred on the Indian soil, and they naturally had to and did take into account the peculiar conditions which the meeting of two peoples, diverse in origin and outlook, always involved in the history of the world. South Africa and the United States of America, which furnish modern parallels, have been much less successful in solving the conflict of races. In fact, the solution of the problems created by differences has altered the religion of the Indo-Aryan settlers: there has been a 'giving and taking' in some respects, though, as might be expected, the predominant factor has been the evolution of a composite religion centering round the original faith of the Aryans.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is not a religion in the sense in which we now understand religion. The word Hindu is not Indian in origin ; nor was 'Hinduism' ever used by the Hindus as the name of their religion. The word *dharma*, frequently used in the description of their religion, is not easily translated into the English language. In fact, it is a conception and a way of life. *Dharma* was conceived as the only mode of individual and social life at all times and in all places, and that is at least one of the reasons why it was qualified as Sanātana Dharma (perennial religion). But when religions arose having distinguishing names derived from their originators or inspirers, it became inevitable that a word should be found to designate the way of life lived by the ancient Indians, as one form of religion among others by way of contrast. The Sanātana Dharma used at one time to be called Brāhmaṇism and is even now occasionally called so. The term 'Brāhmaṇism' misrepresents its nature in so far as it implies that it had its origin from the Brāhmaṇas. The name 'Hinduism' has the merit of avoiding that implication, and convenience requires that the word should be retained to describe the Indian's mode of life inclusive of his religion in the strict sense of the term.

The name Sanātana Dharma was not intended to stand for each

individual observance, but only for the *dharma* viewed as a whole and in the abstract.[2] The lawgivers and the Mīmāṁsakas knew only too well that their laws had been changed or modified from time to time according to the needs of an expanding society; but the content of *dharma* was in all its essential parts *sanātana* or eternally the same. Just as a person may grow and shed particles of his body and yet retain unchanged his individual identity, so does this body of Hindu *dharma* retain its unity and individuality across the ages from the time anterior to the *Ṛg-Veda*.[3] Its *sanātana* character is not destroyed but maintained by its adaptability and adaptations. The institutions of today are founded on ideas which were alive and active in the Ṛg-Vedic and pre-Ṛg-Vedic times. And *dharma* has its roots in ancient ideas and ideals.

SCHEME OF THE SMṚTIS

As already implied in the definition given at the opening of the chapter, the Smṛtis are not mere law-books. There is involved in the Smṛtis much more than the civil and criminal laws, the rules of inheritance, and the laws of marriage and families. Every detail of the daily life of the individual is included in the Smṛti literature; besides social arrangements, with all the social institutions. The king's duties in relation to the internal and external affairs of the country are also included therein. It is difficult to conceive of anything bearing on the conduct of any individual or group of individuals or of society as a whole that does not fall within the regulation attempted by the Smṛtis. Worship of the gods, ceremonies in commemoration of the dead, birth and death, pollutions, expiatory acts, sacrifices, and customs and manners to be observed in daily life and behaviour are all included in the Smṛtis, indicating thereby their all-embracing character.

The period of the Smṛtis strictly so-called may cover one thousand five hundred years; but for an understanding of the Smṛtis and the lives lived under their influence, an extension of the period farther back into the preceding age, and forward almost up to the middle of the last century is required. In the pre-Smṛti period, that is, before the days of the Sūtras and the metrical Smṛtis, we had only manuals of different Vedic schools for the instruction of pupils, and before that period we had only continuous oral tradition handed down from teacher to pupil. The matter of the recorded Smṛtis thus goes back to the Vedic and pre-Vedic period. If the

[2] The opposite view that 'everything in Hinduism is ancient and nothing is obsolete' is not unknown.

[3] The hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda* existed and were used before they were collected into a book. By the term 'pre-Ṛg-Vedic' is meant the time of the hymns before they were collected—not the times before the composition of the hymns of which we know nothing definite.

Ṛg-Veda goes back to at least 1500 B.C., a far more ancient date must be assigned to the beginnings of the culture represented by the Vedas.

There is a very precise philosophy of life, individual and social, behind the scheme of the Smṛtis. That philosophy is at least as old as the Upaniṣads. The universe is one vast pulsating life. The manifestation of that life is not all alike or in one grade. It sleeps in metal. It is awake in plants. It moves and knows in animals. It knows, and knows that it knows, in man. Increasing complexity of biological organization runs through physical evolution. It culminates in man.

Further progress is not in the direction of the evolution of a new and higher species; but along a wholly new track, that of the cultural evolution of man in organized society. As in physical, so in social evolution, increasing complexity characterizes a rise in the scale. In both spheres such complexity involves danger. With the break-down of any part, the whole will collapse. Increasing vigilance is the price of individual and social security, and increasing capacity, intelligence and power are the result of man's life in society. Division of function and close-knit inter-dependent unity are the marks of growth, which bring in their train increasing sensitiveness and mutual adjustment and co-ordination of parts acting in unison for the achievement of a recognizable purpose.

Man is essentially divine and immortal. He has, sure enough, roots in the earth. He is an animal among animals, though at the top of the ascending series. This is his physical heritage. But in mind and spirit, with his power to look back and think and philosophize and plan and create, he is akin to the Intelligence that is at the heart of the universe. He came from Brahman, and unto Brahman he will return. He will be at one with Brahman at the end of the *saṁsāra* or the cycle of births. Not in one birth, but in several, does man learn his true nature, and grow into a perfect recognition of what, in fact, he is and has been all along. Man is but the result of his past and present actions in all the three spheres of his existence, physical, mental, and spiritual. And each new life starts at the point where the previous life ended, with the accumulated heritage of aptitudes and capacities. This process of the continuous ascent of man is pursued through the ages and in countless lives.

The individual requires for his growth a certain social environment; and society must take note of it and provide it for him. But this need cannot be satisfied unless the units take their proper places and make their true contributions to the co-operative concern of social life. Each unit truly appreciating its own share in the social process must contribute its quota of service to the collective life of the society.

DIVISION OF TYPES AND FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya, and the Śūdra are essential parts of a social organism. Having regard to the nature of these functions, they are likened respectively to the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the legs of the cosmic Puruṣa. By the perfect co-ordination of the functions of these limbs does a society live as an efficient organism. Any of these functions failing, society will be thrown out of gear, and its unity will be destroyed.

Men are in different stages of evolution. They are of different types, and are fit for performing different duties. The Brāhmaṇa learns and teaches; he ministers to the spiritual needs of the people as priest, preceptor, and preacher; he advises the sovereign, expounds and administers laws, and helps in framing and carrying out legislative policy. He is the custodian of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the race. The Kṣatriya governs and performs the executive functions of the State, protects and preserves order against external aggression and internal forces making for disorder, and he is the custodian of social power. The Vaiśya class includes the agriculturist, the merchant, the manufacturer, and the trader, and all those who provide the sustenance of the race, and it is the custodian of the economic functions of the community. The Śūdra is that portion of the population which, being incapable of independent initiative on an adequate scale, merely assists in the discharge of essential functions by the contribution of manual labour. With opportunity for unimpeded growth, a man reaches to the full height of his stature. In pre-natal growth he re-enacts his biological evolutionary history. After birth the history of a man becomes the history of the liberation of his faculties, and their unfolding in active life. Life never rises beyond what the potential capacity of the individual makes possible.

STAGES OF LIFE

Now let us turn to the problems of life as they present themselves to one who entertains the general ideas given above. A social scheme must provide for the continuous prolongation of life to successive generations, progressively increasing the population, where an increase is required for security, or maintaining the population at the optimum level, where increase is not needed. This renewal of life is secured by the recognition of a duty to the *pitṛs*, or the guardians of the physical body of the race. The germ plasm travels from the ancestor to the descendant. There is this physical continuity of the race recognized in the Sūtras. The father is born again in his wife as the son. It is he himself that is named the son. The intellectual and cultural heritage and traditions of the race have to be

handed on. This handing on, with such augmentations as each generation is able to make, is secured by the recognition of a duty to the intellectual guardians of the race, the *ṛṣis* (seers). Worship and sacrifice are the duties that man owes to the *devas* or divine powers that preside over life. This is nothing more than the recognition of the normal needs of all societies at all times; only they are founded on the conception of a threefold duty in three spheres of life, which in its mode of expression looks archaic and quaint. Take two individuals: one in the most advanced stratum of life the other in the least advanced one; both follow their typical career in society. At birth, they are both Śūdras, irresponsible, and have little to distinguish one from the other except that the families of both, that is, the parents, are distinguishable. Both grow physically and mentally as their individual capacity permits. It is only in point of innate capacity that the one is held once-born and the other twice-born. The first cannot usefully be introduced to the abstruse and higher lore of the scriptures. He performs indispensible service in his own sphere. He is associated with the other classes in their work. His sphere is not one of independent responsibility. It is subordinate and subsidiary. Most of his work is carried on under the direction of others. His education and assimilation are effected by association with the superior person in his family life. Service is his contribution to society, and this serves to train and discipline him as a social unit. The other, being a twice-born with higher capacity, is initiated at the age of eight, or earlier if precocious, but never later than sixteen,[4] when his education, namely, his scriptural study, begins; and it generally continues for not less than twelve years. A keen student might care to study two Vedas or even three in twenty-four or thirty-six years.[5] A few may not care to marry, but may remain *brahmacārins* for life (*naiṣṭhika*). One who so decides has no progeny and may thereby ignore one of the triple debts, viz. debt to the ancestors (*pitṛs*). This is not considered wrong in the case of those whose passion is to advance the higher intellectual and cultural interests of the society. The mind-born sons of Brahmā refused to marry in response to the higher impulses of their nature, and thereby served society and their own spiritual interests more eminently than by rearing a family; and these secured eternal recognition from every Aryan making offerings to the *ṛṣis* as their spiritual ancestors. Normal life takes the temporary student (*upakurvāṇa*) on to marriage. He becomes a teacher or priest or official, making his learning available to the public and to the

[4] The Kṣatriya is generally initiated at eleven, and the Vaiśya at twelve. The numbers eight, eleven, and twelve seem mystically connected with Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas and the metres *gāyatrī*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī*.

[5] Baudhāyana adds forty-eight years including the *Atharva-Veda*.

State. He becomes a father and passes on the heritage of his life, in all the three spheres, to the next generation. The sacrifices he performs in the latter part of his life in the family are intended to discharge his third debt, namely that he owes to the gods. When the son takes to family life and has himself a son, the father is ready to withdraw from active family duties and turn his attention to the service of the public. He becomes a forest-dweller (*vānaprastha*). His physical and mental disciplines reach a further stage. He may generally live alone. Though his wife may accompany him, his sex life has already nearly ended. After a few years he withdraws from even this connection with the world and prepares himself for the other world, that is, he has no mind for anything but the spiritual concerns of life.

It may be noted that the first stage in this evolved life of the individual is that of a Śūdra, but his higher evolution effected through celibate studentship takes him onwards; and when he is fully educated, he passes on to the next stage of life as a householder which is akin to the Vaiśya stage of social evolution. He cannot rest even there and so passes to a stage of public service, having discharged his three debts within the framework of family life. This stage is like that of a Kṣatriya with his attention centred not in his own self or family, but in society and social affairs. The final stage is that of liberation, in which accumulation of higher knowledge and things of the spirit occupy his mind and life.

The advantage of a division of types and the assignment of different functions to each is this: it is conducive to smooth social life inasmuch as it leads to the cessation of personal conflict and also to the production of increased efficiency secured through the specialization of function. For this people are prepared by the concentration of their aspiration and the concentration of the powers of their 'sense of perception' and 'sense of action', that is, by the combination of the eye and the arm. Conflict between different generations of people is also put a stop to, by the retirement of each generation in due time when the next generation is ready to take the place of the outgoing one. The above constituted the general theory of life for society and for the individual.

WOMEN AND THE ŚŪDRAS

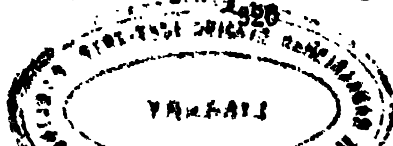
This may give a one-sided picture, if we do not add a few words regarding the real position of women and the Śūdras in society. There is a view, which has the support of the Mīmāṁsakas, that women had equality with men in acts and sacrifices and property;[6] but this conception is not likely to be accepted without contest, so changed are our present views of

[6] The text *Svargakāmo yajeta* includes women also. The subject is legislative masculine, which includes feminine.

women and their rights and status. Nor is this change a recent one. Those, at any rate, who took the adverse view claimed to have the support of Baudhāyana: 'Women lacked strength and had therefore no right to a share'. Even such rights as they indubitably possessed have fallen into disuse in many places. The wife's share in a partition, as well as the mother's, is no longer enforced in the Brahmarṣi-deśa or the region below the Vindhyas. The daughter's loss is not much. She has lost her one-fourth share only to gain all; in middle-class families her marriage often absorbs more than her due share. It beggars many a family. Where a woman does receive property at partition or by inheritance, her right has been reduced to one of enjoyment for life, notwithstanding Vijñāneśvara's more liberal interpretation of her rights.

The caste system, which so largely dominates the regulations of the Smṛtis as to marriage and inheritance and also in the sphere of criminal law and social usages, is connected with external life and social organization. It does not affect the growth of the inner spirit of man in any sphere. If the exact texts of the Vedic lore are denied to the Śūdra, nothing of substance has been denied to him. His growth in every department is unimpeded. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and all other valuable books conceived as man-made, are open to study for all. Even the unchanted Vedas, verbally the same, may be listened to and understood by the uninitiated classes. The Vedas is denied, but not its meaning. As the saying goes: *Sasvaro vedaḥ asvaro vedārthaḥ*—. The Vedas chanted is Vedas, and the Vedas without chant is the meaning of the Vedas. The Purāṇas and the Itihāsas are not without stories of the non-Aryan's being referred to and approached for a solution of problems relating to a conflict of *dharma*. Nor was the position of these well-instructed non-Aryans always one of inferiority. In the purely spiritual sides of life, for example, among the *bhakti*-dominated communities, the spiritual equality of all the *devotees*, irrespective of caste, was recognized. Whether the equality allowed in these brotherhoods was only spiritual and did not touch the regulations of a settled social order, may always be a matter of controversy. The Smārtas on one side and the Vaiṣṇavas and Vīra-Śaivas on the other will always differ on this point, the Smārtas being particular about social regulations. It is again to the *bhakti* schools that we must attribute the recognition and canonization of non-caste saints, and among these schools the Vaiṣṇavas have shown more liberal tendencies than the Śaivas—as the regulations in the Śiva and Viṣṇu temples about the different modes of recognition of caste indicate.

Neither women nor the Śūdras in general, were treated as slaves in the Smṛti period. One may find harsh words regarding both in some parts of



the Smṛtis, indicating that expressions of ideas have not always been the impressions of our best or most discriminative moods; but life has always flowed in right channels. For along with these very harsh words we find other passages inculcating the duty of guidance and protection, and that of leniency in judging the conduct of the uninstructed. When the Aryan householder is exhorted to feed all including the *śvapaca* (outcaste) before he feeds himself, one has an idea that these ancient lawgivers were not without a sense of how much social stability depended on social justice.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS

It is now possible to gather up certain general ideas that run through the scheme: Equality is spiritual; inequality is the present fact. Equality is only potential. Social organization cannot be founded on what will one day be in theory, but must be founded on what is here and now. There must be differentiation of functions, however equal in the eye of law all may be. There is no real or presumable inequality between those who perform indispensable functions. Each should be fixed up according to his quality and made to specialize. No other arrangement for replacement in each function is so easy and self-fulfilling as birth settling a person's place in the social organism. Rare are the cases where another rule may be called for;[1] but general unsettlement of the norm for accommodating a rare case is unwise and full of disadvantage in the long run. A general rule just in the main deserves to be recognized and enforced.

To woman is assigned the care of the home. Family being her creation, her association with man in every sphere is stressed. Her unassociated individuality is ignored, and she is advised to turn her back on it even to the total suppression of what may be her individual spiritual need. Within the home her influence has been much greater than alien observers imagine. When circumstances have drawn her outside the home to high duties, she has shown capacity, courage, and strength. Classes are formed according to capacity, and transmission of capacity and quality is presumed in the generality of cases. So function on the basis of birth is established as a means of preventing unhealthy competition. Living and a due share of family life are secured in this way much more satisfactorily than by leaving the matter to unrestricted competition. On some important matters, opinion looked like taking one line, but it oscillated and finally passed into another line. The first line was in deference to theory; the second was accepted as the demand of experience. The theory covered exceptions

[1] For example, Candragupta and Śivājī were not Kṣatriyas. Candragupta and Aśoka were held in high esteem as rulers, and great efforts were made to find a Kṣatriya genealogy for Śivājī.

and allowed special treatment to exceptional cases. The habit of ignoring the exceptions, and so avoiding the dangers of unsettlement and confusion arising from special provisions, became one of the cardinal principles of later thought. The abolition of initiation and *brahmacarya* for women falls in this changed line of thought. The few cases of Aryan progeny on non-Aryan women being brought up as Aryan and the subsequent abandonment of it also fall in this category. Here again falls the abandonment of the attempt at incorporating the once-born in an Aryan household and raising him by intimate social association. It perhaps deserved to be abandoned. All attempts at uplift in unequal proximate association are bound to fail, since they do not take account of the psychological difficulties. There is much of goodwill, but little of sound knowledge in such attempts. The superior and the inferior alike, by their ever-present and unforgettable consciousness of differences in social life, tend to be demoralized and to fall from virtue. Examples of this truth are all around us. Therefore much association with the non-Aryan is deprecated. He has no longer the same old freedom in the Aryan household. Marriage outside one's caste with the demoralizing inequality of position for the wife is abolished or discountenanced. A good deal of the injustice of unequal competition is removed by making each class keep within its own fold in marriage.

It is not out of place, however, to add one or two reflections which are intended as an exposition, and not as a criticism. No plan has a chance of success unless it has the general consensus of informed opinion and general goodwill behind it. When the consensus and goodwill fail, the conditions for its successful working disappear. It is a question whether the system of *varṇas* (castes) has worked within the limits set, or has gone beyond the allotted sphere, producing what has been called 'confusion of functions'. Mathematical precision is not attainable in estimating the consequences of planning; life breaks through and disturbs all calculations. A step may not produce the intended consequences; or it may produce, along with the desired consequences, others not foreseen or desired. When unforeseen consequences arise, corrections may be needed, and these corrections may be as inexact as the original and may also produce other unforeseen consequences. Planning is a continuous process and not, at any time, a finished and completed programme which may go on in the expected manner along expected lines without further interference. Facts have not one, but two ends or poles. According to the prevailing mood and circumstances we stress the one or the other of them; we do not take account of both. Periodically, the weight of collective judgement shifts from one to the other. We do not all think alike; some are at one pole and some at the other. The same mood does not overtake all of us at the same time. Life

flows along lines determined as the resultant of complicated forces set free by differing and contending humanity.

These are not, by any means, intended as a criticism of the conservative Indian view. Those who accept the Indian social philosophy adduce these very reasons to support their view that forces are incalculable and must be allowed to operate naturally without society being forced into a line chosen by a few men, however eminent they may be, and that individual one-sidedness can be corrected only by the sanity of collective judgements allowed to be expressed not by votes, but by the preferences expressed in actual life.

VARṆA AND CASTE

It has been said that caste is a unique and a puzzling institution of Hindu India, not to be found anywhere else in the world. The uniqueness of caste is undeniable, but it is rooted in intelligible psychology and was almost inevitable in the circumstances in which it arose. It started in ideas which are world-wide and have their counterparts in the modern world. There has been much speculation as to its origin. Sir P. S. Sivasvami Iyer in his 'Kamalā Lectures' on Hindu Ethics says that the system of castes was not the invention of the Brāhmaṇa. No one who knows the real nature of the caste system, as it is, and as it has been, could commit the mistake of supposing that it was brought into being by a single individual or group of individuals. There are in existence today some hundreds of groups that go by different caste names and show all the qualities of separate castes. When did these groups come into existence? Did the Brāhmaṇa 'ordain' these divisions? The Śūdras show divisions into hundreds of castes. The untouchables show divisions—grades of untouchability and pollution. What possible advantage could the Brāhmaṇa derive in dividing the Śūdras and the untouchable classes below them? The truth is that divisions have always existed, and they are not the creation of any single individual at any point of time. The Brāhmaṇa has not sought to disrupt human society, but has attempted to bring order into the existing chaos by extending his own fourfold functional division to the grouping of the divided population. The process by which his own conception of a fourfold division came to be brought into Hindu India may now be examined.

There are two clues that may be usefully followed—one is the history of the fourfold division and the other the division of the Aryans into *gotras* or clans. The fourfold division is found among the Parsis also. The Parsi names for these groups are Atharvas, Rathaesthas, Vastryafshuyans, and Huiti. The Atharvas were fire priests, and their name is connected with the Indian *atharvan*. The priest that feeds the fire in an Indian sacrifice, *agnīdhra*, has his counterpart in the *atarevakṣha*, he who has an eye on the

sacrificial fire all the time. The Parsi language has the word *atash* meaning fire, which is not found in Sanskrit except in *atharvan* and *atharvāṅgiras*, both representing in India names of fire priests. And in Persian history there is evidence that the Atharvas grew not only into a separate class but also became a caste not mixing with any other group. The warrior class is represented by a word which means the highest of the four arms in the ancient military science, namely, a car-warrior.

The Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya, at any rate, were functional names. The abstract terms, Brahman and Kṣatra, indicate their functional character. The Viś was the residual name for the Aryan population after separating those that fell within the definition of Brahman and Kṣatra. These three names exhaust the Aryan group. The fourth name is the name of those outside the original Aryan population. We meet the statement in Sanskrit books that the Aryans were men of three *varṇas*.

This division of the Aryans into three functional groups was, therefore, a growing institution in Indo-Iranian times. We do not know when exactly the Persian Atharvas developed caste exclusiveness. The *gotra* division in India is anterior to the collection of the *Ṛg-Veda* as a separate book. Sacrifices had by that time been reduced to a common system, but there was one group of hymns known as *Āprī-sūktas* that varied with the *gotra* of the performer. These, again, seem to go back to the Indo-Iranian times, as the Parsis have their *Afrigan mantras* corresponding to *Āprīgaṇas*. The formation of class for ceremonial purposes is again pre-Ṛg-Vedic and Indo-Iranian.

The class formations were not by any means rigid at first. It is possible to suppose that even when the Parsi Atharvas were forming into an exclusive caste, those who were subsequently grouped under the name of Indian Aryans were only having their divisions in an extremely fluid condition. When the Iranians had settled down as agriculturists, the Indians were still nomadic. The Iranians complain of the depredations of these nomads. The Indians in their turn speak of the seasons first obeying and serving the *asuras*, and the *devas* securing control over the seasons only subsequently by appropriate sacrificial ceremonies. During this period, when the Aryans were still moving and had not formed themselves into definite settlements; they must have been performing all the functions of an invading population without any differentiation or exact division of functions. They performed their religious functions as heads of their households and leaders of their communities; they must have fought when necessary and performed the warrior's functions, and they must have accumulated property, which then and for a long time consisted of cattle (*paśu*). Even when these functions came to be performed by different hands, and the differentiation came into

special notice, the people did not thereby become divided. Sons followed the profession of their fathers, but marriages took place between the still undivided Aryans. It was not the mother that settled the place of the child but the father, and there was not yet any question of *anuloma* (wife inferior in caste) and *pratiloma* (husband inferior in caste) differentiation as to marriages. The system was simple and intelligible. The people were one, and no restriction as to alliances by marriage had yet arisen or could arise. The sons followed the profession of the fathers as a matter of convenience and were not prohibited from changing it.*

In this fluid social condition, the group settles down in the midst of the indigenous Indian population. The freedom of intercourse among the Aryans is at first exercised even in the midst of this new population different in race and quality. The Aryan mixes with the indigenous group and tries to bring up the children of mixed marriages as if they were Aryans. In a few cases such experiments apparently succeed, but in the large majority of cases they do not. That some early cases of this type were actually accepted as part of the Aryan sacerdotal group is supported by the *Mahābhārata*. The Aryans discourage the experiment of bringing up the issue of mixed marriages as if they were pure Aryans. But the union is allowed to continue. The issue take a lower place in the family, but they may wield considerable influence. Vidura's place in the family of the Kauravas in the *Mahābhārata* or that of a Nair son in a Sāmanta household of today in the West Coast will indicate the position of the sons of these mixed marriages. Sir P. S. Sivasvami Iyer notices that this recognition of the mixed marriages—no doubt with decreasing influence and status—went on till the time of Bāṇa, but had ceased by A.D. 1100. But long before this stage was reached, the mother's class had come to be taken into consideration in fixing the position of the issue. Slowly the position of the father as the determining factor fell into the background, and the mother's status became the sole determining factor. It is the presence and influence of the racial factor in the case of the fourth caste that affected the relations among the first three also, and the free intermarriage of the first three came to be replaced by the rule of inferior and superior, *anuloma* and *pratiloma*

The ancient discussion about the dominance of the seed or the field came to be definitely settled in favour of the field when we come to Manu with his clearly enunciated *varṇa* division. Incidentally, one may express a doubt as to the legitimacy of the comparison between the father's function fixing the sons' function in older times and the mother's caste fixing

* Many Kṣatriya women married Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇa Śukra's daughter married Yayāti, a Kṣatriya, and the Smṛti of Uśanas supports the validity of that marriage.

the sons' caste in later times. The conception of class was functional in the first period, but it became a caste in the second.

GOTRA AND PRAVARA

Gotra is clan with a specific name. Each *gotra* has what is called a *pravara*—names of *ṛṣis* or seers who are stated to be their ancestors. A person who pays his respect to an elder announces himself in these terms: 'I invoke your blessing, I am the descendant of Aṅgiras, Bṛhaspati, and Bharadvāja, of the *gotra* of Bharadvāja, follower of the *Āpastamba-Sūtra*, of the name of N. N., venerable Sir!' The use of *gotra* and *pravara* in a sacrifice is twofold. It fixes the *Āprī* hymn. The other use is in the invocation of the gods. The gods do not know any except their own devoted hymn-makers of the *Ṛg-Veda*. They do not respond to the invocation of any who are not the descendants of those devotees. So every sacrificer announces himself as the descendant of A, B, and C (authors of hymns). Another priest mentions the same names in the reverse order 'as in the case of C, B, and A'. The gods are invoked to attend the sacrifice as they did in the sacrifice of his ancestors. This necessity to specify the ancestry of the sacrificer in sacrifices was an established idea from before the time of the *Ṛg-Veda*.

Seven are the primal *ṛṣis*. Four of them are ancestors of human beings. But eighteen separate groups arose out of these four. If the *pravara ṛṣis* were common, marriage was not permissible between the families. But Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras, two out of the four, do not exclude such marriages in all cases. As our object here is not the study of these *gotras* and *pravaras*, it is not necessary to recount all the *pravaras* or the relations among them. It is enough to say that ten out of the eighteen families are of Kṣatriya origin. Bhṛgu took into his family four Kṣatriyas who were also makers of hymns—Mitrayu, Śunaka, Veṇa, Vītahavya. The first name in all the families is Bhṛgu in the *pravara* list. But Bhṛgu's own descendants and the descendants of these four Kṣatriyas constitute five different groups and they intermarry. Aṅgiras had similarly affiliated six Kṣatriyas —Hārīta, Kaṇva, Mudgala, Rathītara, Saṅkṛti, Viṣṇuvṛddha ; and Aṅgiras's own family and these six families, all of which invoke Aṅgiras as their first *pravara ṛṣi* intermarry. Viśvāmitra became a *gotra*-originator without getting affiliated to anybody else and he is generally cited as the one who, having been a Kṣatriya, became a Brāhmaṇa in assertion of his own independent right ; his claim to Brāhmaṇahood being a matter of contest for a long time until finally, according to the current tradition, Vasiṣṭha agreed to accept his status as Brāhmaṇa. The Kṣatriyas who have not *thus* passed into Brāhmaṇa groups have either Manu alone or Manu, Ila,

and Purūravas as the *pravara*. And Bhalandana, Vatsaprī, and Maṅkila are considered the progenitors of the Brāhmaṇas who were Vaiśyas in origin.

The above narrative leads to the following conclusion: There was a time when it was possible to pass from one group to another. The groups were not yet castes, but only represented functions. While the groups closed their gates against new entrants, there was struggle against such closure, and for a time entry was allowed unwillingly. The circumstances in which entry was allowed by affiliation are the subject of stories which sound natural. The Kṣatriyas fight and chase one another. They enter hermitages for protection against attack, much as sanctuary in churches was resorted to for escape from punishment, and settled down as part of the priestly groups that gave them shelter. Well-known Kṣatriya names occur among the Brāhmaṇa *pravaras*: Veṇa, Pṛthu, Divodāsa, Pṛṣadaśva, Ajamīdha, Kaṇva, Purukutsa, and Trasadasyu. There has thus been a period when the class to which one belongs is coming to be recognized, and yet his moving into another class is permitted; but very naturally, each gets slowly fixed up in separate groups.

When the *Mahābhārata* states that there was a time when there was no caste and all were Brāhmaṇas (being born of Brahmā) it refers to an early time when the Aryan group considered itself one and undivided either as castes or classes. Then the fighting class emerged in the *tretā* and lastly came the Vaiśya or the trading group. Some speculation there is in the account, but it does correspond, it would seem, to a real stage in the evolution of castes.

MIXED CASTES

Not until the Aryan settled in the country of the non-Aryan, did the threefold division of the Aryan himself assume its final form. First came the recognition of the Śūdras as non-Aryans. Next came the division of the Aryans into three groups. The idea of division into classes as high and low according to function, the contact between the high and the low, and a consciousness of degradation by such contact between the groups must have partly contributed as causal factors in laying down successive rules that a Brāhmaṇa produced Brāhmaṇa issue only on a Brāhmaṇa women. When this result was reached, new names were being given to the issue of mixed marriages. Marriages in *anuloma* forms produced intermediate issue—above the mother's caste and below the father's. Mixed marriages between Aryans produced issue of the regenerate caste, but the issue of a Śūdra woman by an Aryan of the three castes produced a child which had *saṁskāras* only as a Śūdra. If the marriage was a mixed one in the *pratiloma* form, the issue was considered degraded. Still, if the

parents were Aryan, they were not wholly excluded. Their *saṁskāras* were like those of Śūdras, but their touch did not pollute. The Śūdra's progeny on the women of the higher castes, and more particularly on Brāhmaṇa women were execrated, the last being described as Caṇḍālas or untouchables. The most elaborate calculation on what may be called a eugenic or dysgenic scale will be found in chapter ten of the *Manu Saṁhitā*. Many other Smṛtis have the same scale, not always with the same names. Uśanas has many names for mixed castes and the issue of mixed castes married to mixed castes and his views on *pratiloma* marriage is more liberal than those of Manu. It is unnecessary to go into details.

Some of the names of mixed progeny are connected with the performance of essential functions in social economy; some are the names of well-known tribes. These are explained as resting on the basis of a mixture of castes, known and unknown. These names are a fanciful attempt at explaining the origin of the many groups that actually existed. They are not less fanciful than the description of some of the tribes, viz. Puṇḍrakas, Coḷas, Drāviḍas, Kāmbojas, Pāradas, Pallavas, Cīnas, Kirātas, Daradas, Śakas, and Yavanas, as degraded Kṣatriya tribes. Perhaps this latter statement may have much more justification in that it indicates that these are Kṣatriyas in function, that is to say, by instinct, character, and profession, but that they were degraded, because they did not conform to the Smṛti requirements of a perfect Aryan life. The fixing of the names of mixed castes has not even that degree of justification. They only embody the fancy or the speculative estimate of the writers that the tribe or group by its quality and function may be a cross of the castes represented as the origin of the tribe.

The rules about raising the status of the issue of mixed castes by successive hypergamous unions are to be found both in Manu and Yājñavalkya. No case is recorded, not even a mythical one, in the Purāṇas. But its possibility on the Indian conception of castes is conceded by what must be accepted as high authority. Uśanas goes so far as to put in different groups those born of marriage in irregular order and also of illicit unions. How are the places in society to be determined except by supposing that the parents furnished the information, or some record was available to furnish the basis for classification? If successive marriages should raise the child to a higher status in five, six, or seven generations, the caste of the parent has to be remembered or recorded, and the result, accordingly, decided and maintained. It requires also to be stated that the rule has been practically a dead letter, embodying nothing but a theory almost impossible of enforcement in practice.

Only one more curious rule has to be noticed in this connection with

its implications. In the ancient sacrifices, the sacrificer was required to name ten ancestresses. As often as he reached the name of a non-Brāhmaṇa ancestress, it is to be omitted, and the next Brāhmaṇa ancestress is to be named. This rule reminds one of the times when the caste distinction was hardening; but the marriage of a Brāhmaṇa with a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya woman was still considered to produce the equal or nearly equal of a Brāhmaṇa.

VEDIC STUDY

The Aryans alone had the privilege of Vedic study. Aryan women at one time had Vedic discipline, but came to lose it. There is a belief in the South that there are now no Kṣatriyas or Vaiśyas. The law is bound to recognize them as such, however fallen they may be from the ideals set up for them in the Smṛtis. The Brāhmaṇa himself does not retain the old discipline, except the most nominal vestige of it. He has invariably the initiation and the *upākarman*. Of Vedic study during the term, there is a little in the villages and next to nothing in the urban areas. While the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas have wholly discarded the discipline, the Brāhmaṇas retain its forms.

In an earlier age, women had their initiations, they studied the Vedas under a teacher, performed the daily *gāyatrī-japa* and fire worship (*samid-ādhāna*), (both held in great reverence), and had the option to marry or settle as *brahmavādinīs*. For reasons which can only be guessed, early marriage was thought desirable for women. The Smṛtis without exception recommended for them marriage before puberty. As popular sentiment deepened in favour of early marriage, the condemnation took more violent forms. The father was blamed, with increasing penalties in another world, for his neglect. Though Manu said that the girl might wait for three years and marry herself after puberty and neither she nor he whom she married incurred any guilt or sin, the later Smṛtis condemned both as having fallen out of the Aryan fold.

Naturally, with marriage before puberty, Vedic study could not go on. Women's attention was turned to the cleansing of the household. Though their native intelligence could not be suppressed and they wielded considerable influence in domestic and other affairs, the Smṛtis contracted the habit of linking them to the Śūdras, because both were excluded from Vedic study. Marriage is the one sacrament with *mantras* for women, which takes the place of *mauñji-bandhana* (i.e. a student's 'tying of the girdle of *muñja* grass); and these *mantras* contain passages which only the wife can address to her husband in privacy. They now appear to be mechanically recited by the husband. According to one view, a wife may

recite these *mantras* by reason of *mantra-liṅga* (what the sacred formula signifies) although the Vedas are not open to her in this age. Inconvenient *mantras* have been dropped elsewhere, but by some oversight this tell-tale *mantra* remains in marriage.

ĀŚRAMAS

Varṇa (caste) is fixed at birth. *Āśrama* (order of life) is a connected institution, and no one can be compelled to move into a new *āśrama* at any stage of life. Though *upanayana* (the holy thread ceremony) appears compulsory from modern practice among Brāhmaṇas, that was not, however, the case in early days. The penances and disciplines laid down for those who were not initiated in time prescribed and for those whose ancestors were not initiated for one, two, or three generations, indicate that initiation was neglected in some families.

STUDENT LIFE

Brahmacarya came to mean two things—the study of the Vedas (*Brahma*) and chastity, which was its necessary concomitant. The object of the *āśrama* was to build up the student in all the spheres of life, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. That was the foundation of all the *āśramas*. He studied the Vedas, performed *gāyatrī-japa* (muttering of the *gāyatrī*) with control of breath in the two *sandhyas* (junctions of day and night) as fixed by the Vedas and in mid-day also as the Smṛtis ordained, had to worship fire twice a day and then beg for alms from householders, eat twice a day with no intermediate meal, lie on the bare ground, limit his contact with young women, and perform the necessary salutations to women, avoiding the touch of their feet when he came to age. He was to avoid luxuries like honey, meat, etc. His bath was to be in cold water without scrubbing or cleaning. The object of these and other similar prescriptions seems to be that everything which might excite sexual feeling and lead to lapses from chastity was to be avoided by him.

The student's growing constitution was remembered when he was allowed to eat as much as he liked, while the other three *āśramas* had limits fixed for them—thirty-two morsels, sixteen, and eight—decreasing the quantity of food with each change of *āśrama*. Moderation was advised by Manu in the interests of health, and that was secured by the rule that the alms were to be placed before the *ācārya*, who decided how much the student should eat.

The teacher was *in loco parentis* and was not to inflict physical punishment on the student unless necessary, when he might use only a rope or a

light cane. Any severe punishment would be visited with chastisement by the king.

The teacner neither stipulated nor charged a fee for his teaching. He received a fee at the end according to the ability of the pupil. During study, the latter's contribution was only service. He brought water, fuel, and *darbha* grass for his teacher's ceremonies. He put his *ācārya* to sleep by massaging his legs, went to bed after him, but got up earlier. He was taught how he should behave to his teacher, to his teacher's teacher, to his parents, and to others, elder and younger. Strict discipline is indicated by the penances and purifications ordained for even involuntary happenings. The student generally learnt his own Veda, but sometimes there were ambitious students who learnt more than one Veda. The modern titles Dvivedin, Trivedin, Caturvedin remind us of such students.

The term of study was five months—generally from *śrāvaṇī* (July-August) to *pauṣ* (December-January). Of about one hundred and fifty days, thirty were holidays—the *aṣṭamīs* (eighth lunar day), the *caturdaśīs* (fourteenth day), and the full moon and new moon days. Even the *pratipads* (days after the new or full moon) were sometimes omitted, which meant another ten days in five months. With the *naimittika* (occasional) stoppages of study, about a hundred days remained. Twelve years were allotted to each Veda, but apt pupils perhaps acquired the Vedas sooner. Four Vedas and forty-eight years would not otherwise leave time to enter the life of a householder. Even a householder might perhaps continue studies. He certainly kept up the repetition of what he had learnt without any holiday cessation.

When a Brāhmaṇa teacher was not available, even Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas might teach, though their normal duty was in other spheres. This must have happened when the Aryans freely passed from one duty to another.

HOUSEHOLDER

Now one can deal with a view that there was only one *āśrama*—that of the householder, as recognized by the Vedas. One *sūtrakāra* (aphorist) stated: *Aikāśramyaṁ manyanta ācāryāḥ*, meaning that his teacher was of the view that there was but one *āśrama*. A householder brought up children for the next generation, and he was the one who was the support of all other *āśramas*. He added *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (legitimate enjoyment), two more *puruṣārthas* (ends of life), to that of the student. He performed the *Vaiśvadeva* sacrifice among other observances and fed the guests, to whatever caste they belonged, and also his servants before he himself ate. He had many other disciplines: pollutions, purifications,

penances, and *srāddhas* (memorial exercises) for the ancestors. The student was free from all pollutions except when he was himself the performer of exequial rites at which even before initiation he recited Vedic *mantras* by reason of his potential Vedic competence.

As the Upaniṣad says, a competent householder prayed for many students to study under him, 'As the water flows down the canyon, and the months run into the year, so to me the *brahmacārins* should flock, O! Dhātar!'[8] Studying, teaching, entertaining the hungry guests, and fulfilling his many duties, he might pass into the *vānaprastha* when his skin was wrinkled and his hair turned grey.

FOREST LIFE

He left his wife with his son, or she accompanied the husband. He continued Vedic recitation and had his worship of the fire, which he was to carry with him, and he also entertained guests, as the hermits entertained Rāma in the forest. Anasūyā and Lopāmudrā are there to show that great women accompanied their husbands to the forest. That Kṣatriyas went into the *vānaprastha* stage is shown by numerous kings abdicating after installing their sons on the throne, and by Kaṇva's reply to Śakuntalā when she asked whether and when she would again visit the hermitage. A Vaiśya's becoming a *vānaprastha* is nowhere mentioned. It is doubtful whether a Kṣatriya became a *sannyāsin*, and a Vaiśya perhaps never aspired to be one.

RENUNCIATION

A *vānaprasthin* differed from the householder inasmuch as he had to live under greater discipline and has to keep *artha* and *kāma* under stricter control. He was not to shave; and so became venerable-looking with his beard. Later on he passed into the stage of *sannyāsa*, leaving both home and wife and not staying in any one place for more than a day except during the *cāturmāsya* (four monsoon months). The *sannyāsin* shaved his hair and beard, put on brown-red garment as an emblem of the order, subsisted on alms, and slept on the ground, as did the *vānaprasthin*. He ceased to have any fire worship. Having determined the emptiness of life with its joys and sorrows, he meditated on the Reality, attained *ātma-jñāna* (Self-knowledge) and preserved his equanimity unaffected. He returned blessings for curses and strove to remain in what is described as *jīvan-mukti* (liberation in life). On death he became one with God and freed from the round of births and deaths.

[8] *Tai. U.*, I, 4.

If one studies the requirements which each *āśrama* imposes on the *āśramin*, it becomes quite evident that there was great insistence on higher morality. The West has an incorrigible view that morality is inconsistent with pantheism. Chastity, self-control, purity, and other virtues receive recognition in the Smṛtis, and the golden rule is there from at least the time of the first Upaniṣad.

RĀJA-DHARMA

Two chapters of *Manu Saṁhitā* deal with what we should now describe as foreign relations and the home department. The choice of qualified ambassadors and domestic advisers, consultations with them, appointment of the commander-in-chief, the proper time to attack the enemy and to put oneself under a powerful sovereign, and alliances in general are all discussed there in the seventh chapter. Among domestic matters, the method of receiving complaints, the panel of judges to decide civil and criminal cases, and the duty of witnesses to help in the administration of justice by giving truthful evidence are set out in the eighth chapter. The basic ideas of the system are given in *Manu*, VIII. 15. Bühler translates *dharma* in the stanza as justice not inappropriately ; but Manu applies this verse having wider meaning to a limited context. The following rendering of it equating *dharma* with righteousness reveals it:

> Righteousness violated destroys.
> Righteousness observed in action protects.
> Righteousness should not be violated,
> Lest violated righteousness destroy us.

That is exactly the message of *Bhārata-sāvitrī*,[10] the substance of which may be stated thus: From *dharma* comes every good. Even for the sake of saving your life, one should not depart from *dharma*. The *varṇa-dharma* was intended to secure the harmony and smooth course of social life. Duty, not rights, constituted the foundation of life. While this world was not neglected, bread was not all. Successive *āśramas* were intended to improve the spiritual side of the life of people in all grades, and they were designed to lead all to the highest ideal they entertained as the supreme end of man. Those who worked under a sense of duty to man and God without desiring the fruits of action, were not bound.

While the highest goal was taken to be open to all without distinction of caste, creed, or sex, each man's duty was considered as God-given from birth. The *varṇāśrama* system provided a place for every one and the con-

[10] *Mbh.*, XVIII. 5. 63-64.

ception of *svadharma* avoided conflict; at the same time no function was left unprovided for. There were many professions in which the son had his training and attained a proficiency which new entrants could not. They believed that generations working in any art could attain an otherwise unattainable perfection in it.

There may be objections to such regimentation, as it controls life and reduces individual freedom of choice. But the scheme does allow choice within limits. Freedom of choice must face competition, struggle, discord, and all other modern ills, which in their turn can be relieved only by a system no less authoritarian. But regimentation of this new type is often found to exalt the economic concerns as the *summum bonum* of life. The economic side of life is important; however, it is not the only important thing in life.

It may not be inappropriate to end this chapter with an ancient prayer adapted for modern purposes: May we have divine protection; may we live together, with all our differences; may we not hate each other; may what we acquire in the way of knowledge be strongly efficient in its results.

21

THE MANU SAṀHITĀ

PERSONALITY, PRE-EMINENCE, AND ANTIQUITY

IF Pāṇini has determined the nature of Sanskrit for all time, Manu has determined Hindu conduct for all time.[1] Manu became the lawgiver *par excellence*, and his name, a byword for what was righteous and proper. The Vedas say that whatever Manu said is wholesome like medicine, *yad vai kiñcana Manur avadad tad bheṣajam.*[2] Not only was his code pre-eminent among the Dharma-śāstra texts, but it embraced in its sway the whole of India and the neighbouring countries of South-East Asia.[3]

The antiquity of Manu and the heritage associated with his name are both attested by the *Ṛg-Veda*, where we already find the main ideas that Indian tradition has always associated with him, viz. his being the progenitor (Pitar or Prajāpati)[4] of the human race and his having laid the path that his progeny, the human race, should follow for securing its good. He is said to have formulated the rites and brought welfare to mankind, and in one hymn[5] the poet explicitly prays that people may not be led far astray from that path of the ancestors that Manu laid for them, *mānaḥ pathaḥ pitryāt mānavād adhi dūram naiṣṭa parāvataḥ*, a prayer that has found its echo in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa.*[6]

HISTORY OF THE TEXT: RELATION TO OTHER TEXTS

That Manu's teachings, handed down in a mass of floating verses of rules and observations, were governing the life and conduct of people, and that they were invoked as authority, is known from early literature. The *Nirukta* of Yāska (*c.* 700 B.C.) quotes a verse mentioning Manu Svāyambhuva on the right of both sons and daughters to inheritance.[7] The earliest Dharma-Sūtras—*Gautama, Vasiṣṭha,* and *Āpastamba*—quote Manu. In the *Mahābhārata*, which has a large number of citations from Manu, we are told[8] that the Supreme Being gave a treatise on *dharma* in a lakh of verses, that Manu Svāyambhuva produced his work on the basis of that treatise, and that Uśanas and Bṛhaspati composed texts based on the work of Manu

[1] It is interesting to note that in both the cases, the technique employed was *saṁskāra.*
[2] *Taitt. Saṁ.*, II. 2. 10. 2, and elsewhere also.
[3] See Kewal Motwani, *Manu Dharma Śāstra* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1958), pp 312 ff
[4] *Ṛ. V.*, I. 80. 16, 114. 2; II. 33. 13.
[5] *Ṛ. V.*, VIII. 30. 3.
[6] I. 17.
[7] III. 3.
[8] XII. 336. 38 46.

Svāyambhuva.[9] The *Nārada Smṛti*[10] states in its prose introduction that Manu's large treatise on *dharma* was abridged by Nārada, whose work was in turn abridged by Mārkaṇḍeya, and from this abridgement Sumati Bhārgava produced a further condensed version in 4,000 verses. This tradition is supported by the version of Nārada's text with Bhavasvāmin's commentary,[11] which is actually called in the manuscripts *Nāradīya Manu Saṁhitā*.[12] In the current *Manu Smṛti*, we find at the beginning Manu imparting his teaching to Bhṛgu, which agrees with the statement in the *Nārada Smṛti*. That our present Manu text could be taken as the version of Bhṛgu is further supported by the *Nāradīya Manu Saṁhitā*, which thrice quotes from the *Bhārgavī Saṁhitā*, and these quotations are found in our present Manu text.[13] According to another form in which the tradition is repeated in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, the original text of Svāyambhuva Manu was redacted in four forms by Bhṛgu, Nārada, Bṛhaspati, and Aṅgiras. The relation between Manu and Bṛhaspati mentioned here is clearly borne out by the fact that the *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* forms, to adopt Jolly's characterization, a *vārttika* (gloss), so to speak, on Manu's text.[14]

Max Müller, Weber, and Bühler, the last writer especially,[15] assumed that the Vedic schools had each its own Dharma-Sūtras along with its Śrauta-Sūtras and Gṛhya-Sūtras, and that accordingly the present metrical *Manu Smṛti* goes to an earlier *Mānava-Dharma-śāstra* in *sūtras* which belonged to the Mānava school of the Maitrāyaṇīyas of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda*. But the evidence adduced appears to be illusory ;[16] there never was a Mānava text in *sūtras* forming the basis of the later verse treatise.

An analysis of the verses of Manu quoted in the *Ādi*, *Āraṇyaka*, *Śānti*, and *Anuśāsana parvans* of the *Mahābhārata* shows, as Hopkins[17] and Bühler have pointed out, that the great epic knew a Manu text closely connected with the current one but not identical with it, and that as the basis of both the epic and the present *Manu Smṛti*, there existed a floating mass of verses embodying the proverbial wisdom of philosophical and legal schools ascribed generally to Manu. These verses dealt with *dharma* as well as *rāja-dharma*,

[9] Vātsyāyana in his *Kāma-Sūtras*, I. 1. 6, records a similar tradition that out of Prajāpati's large treatise on *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, Manu Svāyambhuva separated *dharma* and dealt with it in a special treatise.

[10] See Jolly, *Institutes of Nārada*, Calcutta, 1885.

[11] Published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series XCVII, 1929.

[12] See T. R. Chintamani, *C. K. Raja Presentation Volume* (Adyar Library, 1946), pp. 154-96, and also Jolly, *Institutes of Nārada*, Calcutta, 1885.

[13] Cf. *Nāradīya Manu Saṁhitā*, pp. 134, 147, and 169.

[14] See *Bṛhaspati Smṛti (Reconstructed)*, K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, GOS, LXXXV, and its Introduction.

[15] SBE, Vol. XXV, Translation of *Manu Smṛti* with Introduction.

[16] See Kane, *History of Dharma-śāstra*, Vol. I.

[17] *The Great Epic*.

and it seems therefore unnecessary to assume with K. P. Jayaswal[18] that the references to Mānava views in *Kauṭilya*, not traceable to our present text of Manu, show the existence of an early *Mānava Rājanīti-śāstra*. From this floating mass of Manu verses, the present *Manu Smṛti*, the redaction of Bhṛgu, might have taken shape between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D.[19] While literary, historical, and epigraphical evidences, the evidence of the Buddhistic *Vajrasūcī*, and the mention of Yonas, Kambhojas, etc. in the present text of Manu would all support this date, it is not possible to be so categorical as Jayaswal, who would identify the *Manu Smṛti* with the work of a historical Mānava and Sumati of the Brāhmaṇic revival under the Śuṅgas.

The relation of the text of the *Manu Saṁhitā* to the other Smṛtis is now considered more specifically. Manu is earlier than Yājñavalkya, whose work shows a more developed treatment of legal procedure. *Nārada* and *Bṛhaspati* are later, being based on Manu. The Sūtras of Gautama, Vasiṣṭha, and Āpastamba quote Manu. There is agreement between Manu on the one hand and Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Āpastamba on the other; and there are common passages in Manu, Vasiṣṭha, and Viṣṇu. According to Bṛhaspati,[20] 'Manu takes the foremost place, because his work is based on the teaching of the Vedas, and any Smṛti text which is opposed to Manu is not to be valued.'

The importance of Manu is also attested by the large-scale citations and frequent invocation of Manu and his authority in the epics, and by the fact that his text has had the largest number of commentaries[21] composed by writers in different parts of India.[22]

THE TEXT OF THE SAṀHITĀ

The *Manu Saṁhitā* or *Manu Smṛti*, as it exists now, is in twelve chapters and 2,694 *anuṣṭubh* couplets. A study of its manuscripts has not shown any difference in the text. The dfferent redactions of the *Mānava-Dharma-śāstra* have already been noticed. In regard to the current text itself, orien-

[18] *Manu and Yājñavalkya* (Tagore Law Lectures), Calcutta, 1930.

[19] The present text of Manu mentions the following branches of Sanskrit literature: the four Vedas, the Āraṇyaka, the Upaniṣad or Vedānta, the Vedāṅgas, the Dharma-śāstras, particularly the *dharma* writers Atri, Bhṛgu, Śaunaka, Vasiṣṭha and Vaikhānasa, Ākhyānas, Itihāsas, and Purāṇas, Khilas, heretical Smṛtis, Daṇḍa-nīti, Ānvīkṣikī, Ātma-vidyā, Vārttā, and Dhanvantari (III. 85).

[20] GOS, LXXXV, pp. 228, 233:
Vedārthopanibaddhatvāt prādhānyam tu Manoḥ smṛtam,
Manvartha-viparītā tu yā smṛtiḥ sā na śasyate.

[21] For an edition of the whole text with some of these, see *Mānava Dharma-śāstra* with Medhātithi, Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa, Kullūka, Rāghavānanda, Nandana, and Rāmacandra by V. N. Mandlik. Bombay, 1886.

[22] In modern times also, when the traditional Hindu sociology is attacked, it is Manu whom the social reformers name and blame.

talists like Bühler were of the opinion that it has several contradictory passages which could be explained only on the theory of several recasts and interpolations and accretions. But as Kane has observed, the facts of the case do not require the assumption of many recasts and additions of topics like cosmogony, philosophy, etc. A closer examination of the context and the understanding of the passage concerned on the basis of accepted rules of interpretation would remove the need to resort in all cases to the theory of interpolations. The apparently divergent statements[23] on taking a Śūdra wife, resorting to *niyoga* (levirate), and eating flesh found in the work are not really contradictory; for they are based on the doctrine of *nivṛttis tu mahāphalā* (greater benefit from abstention) which Manu himself enunciates, and which is basic to the approach and philosophy of Manu and of Hinduism as moulded by Manu and other teachers.[24]

A REAL PICTURE

The graphic picture one gets from a very large number of inscriptions and grants to Brāhmaṇa scholars and families, and from descriptions of the life in *āśramas* (hermitages), courts, and houses found in the poems, plays, and prose works of Kālidāsa, Śūdraka, Bāṇa, Daṇḍin, and others, will bear out the reality of not only the Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya but also of the administration of law by the king as conceived in the *dharma* texts. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* confirms a great part of the Smṛti texts. There are also some works in the form of encyclopaedias, for example, the *Abhilaṣitārtha-cintāmaṇi* of King Someśvara of Kalyāṇ, in which we see how kings set apart a time to look after legal representations with the help of learned advisers. The very existence of a mass of Smṛti digests and commentaries, many of which were compiled by State officials, ministers, or learned men who were *dharmādhikārins* at Courts[25]—not a few ascribed to the kings themselves—is proof of the fact that the *dharma* institutions were in force in the country down the centuries. I have drawn attention to an interesting document on an enquiry which a ruler conducted through a learned scholar of the times on the status and genuineness of the claim of certain communities calling themselves Vaiśyas.[26] Even the detailed distinctions and gradations of intermediary classes of the society, in addition to the four set forth in the Dharma-śāstras, can be verified by conditions obtaining, at least till recently, in Kerala. A close student of Indian literature and history, Julius Jolly, says that there is a strong presumption in favour of the practical nature of these works of *dharma*, and that the legal rules contained in

[23] See Kane, *History of Dharma-śāstra*, Vol. I, pp. 148-9.
[24] See *Manu*. V. 56 and *Bhā*., XI. 5. 11.
[25] e.g. Lakṣmīdhara's *Kṛtyakalpataru*, Hemādri's *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi*, etc.
[26] '*The Vaiśya-vaṁśa sudhārṇava* of Kolācala Mallinātha', *NIA*, II. 442 ff.

them must have corresponded to the laws actually enforced in the native courts of justice.[37] The ideal elements that may exist in the scheme of Manu or the Dharma-śāstras do not make these texts more unreal than the principles laid down in modern constitutions, or underlying modern institutions like democracy, or even the laws of a State today—some of which may be honoured more in their breach than observance—make these constitutions, institutions, or laws unreal. As it is said, because there is *puruṣa-doṣa* (incapacity or evil propensities in some men), the system itself cannot be discredited. There is a dictum of the Dharma-śāstra that while Manu is authority for the *kṛtayuga* (the Golden Age in the past when people really rose to Manu's standards), *Parāśara* holds good for the *kaliyuga*, the current Age ; allowing for the deterioration of standards of *dharma* owing to passage of time and historical developments, the Smṛti framework, as shown above, was something which was obtained in actual life, and not a mere theoretical fabrication.

CONTENTS OF THE WORK

It would be useful first to have an idea of the range of subjects dealt with by Manu. The opening chapter sets forth the origin of the world, creation of beings, the origin of the text as Manu taught it through Bhṛgu, the epochs of time (*yugas*) and the difference in *dharmas* according to them, the four classes of men, and the differences in their respective *dharmas*. It gives also a list of the topics to be subsequently dealt with in the work. The second chapter, with which the main subject-matter begins, speaks of the four sources and grounds or proofs of *dharma*, the person for whom this *dharma* holds good, and the area where it prevails. After dealing with these general questions, the text proceeds to describe the *dharmas* as applicable to each of the four classes, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra. Of these, the first three, the twice-born (*dvijas*), are considered first ; and the sacraments (*saṁskāras*) are described for them in relation to the four stages of life (*āśramas*). These are dealt with primarily with reference to the Brāhmaṇa. This chapter takes us through the *Saṁskāras* beginning with birth and going up to study in the establishment of the teacher, that is, up to the end of the first stage called *brahmacarya* (studentship). In Chapter III, the householder's life, which is the second stage, is taken up ; marriage and its eight different forms, married life, daily and periodical observances of a householder, the vital character and the important social role of the householder, his five daily *yajñas*, or sacrifices (viz. study and teaching of scripture, propitiation of the manes, adoration of the gods by oblations in the fire,

[37] *Outlines of a History of the Hindu Law* (Tagore Law Lectures), Calcutta, 1885, pp. 28-9, 32.

reception of guests, and gratification of other living beings), and the periodic *śrāddhas* are described. Chapter IV continues the description of the householder's life with many details, some relating to *dharmas* already mentioned and some enjoining further *dharmas*, others relating to the ways of earning one's livelihood, and yet others relating to a number of personal habits and details of daily routine and principles of character and conduct. Chapter V opens with the subject of proper food; two other topics dealt with here are death together with obsequies and pollution, and purificatory ceremonies. The last section of this chapter speaks of women (wives and widows) and their special *dharmas*. Chapter VI is devoted to a description of the two further stages of man, the *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, denoting life of retirement in forests and complete renunciation respectively, both having spiritual realization as their purpose. The pursuit of the spiritual aim and resignation by one who continues to be in the household life is also dealt with at the end of the chapter. Chapters VII and VIII together form a section about rulers and their duties (*rāja-dharma*), which include not only their qualities and equipment, but also the art of statecraft in peace and war. Ministers and counsel, diplomacy, messengers, army, fort, wars, conquest, treatment of the conquered, administration of villages, communities, merchants, collection of revenue, punishment, and clearance of anti-social elements—these are spoken of in Chapter VII. The next chapter deals with administration of justice and describes legal procedure in respect of the eighteen titles of civil and criminal disputes, judges, evidence, offences, and punishments. Chapter IX states details about women, particularly from the standpoint of law, their *dharmas*, duties expected of and towards them, and their importance regarding progeny and the family, and also about property, inheritance, and partition, which arise in the wake of the family. The latter part of the chapter speaks of other matters coming under the administration of justice, like debts, gambling, contracts between the employer and the employed, and theft. After touching upon some of the other *rāja-dharmas* left over, the chapter concludes with a brief description of the *dharmas* of the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. In Chapter X the people outside the pale of this system of *dharma* and those born by promiscuous mingling of the four classes and a system by which they could be fitted into the scheme are set forth. In the case of the four classes and their ordained duties, confusion may occur owing to extraordinary developments of a private or public nature; *dharmas* permissible under such emergencies (*āpad-dharmas*) are therefore dealt with. The main subject of Chapter XI is different kinds of sins, major and minor, and their expiations (*prāyaścittas*). The last chapter falls into two sections. The former section speaks of the theory of Karma, the fruits and kinds of birth, high and low, which result from different acts,

good and bad, and through which the soul has to pass. The latter speaks of those *dharmas* which help the spiritual goal—the seeking of Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) and the attainment of the everlasting good (*niḥśreyasa*). Incidentally, the matter of doubts on questions of *dharma* and the constitution of *pariṣads* (assemblies of the learned) for deciding such questions is also dealt with in the latter section of the last chapter.

CONCEPTION OF DHARMA: ITS SALIENT FEATURES

The conception of *dharma* that we see in the *Manu Saṁhitā* is all-comprehensive and at the same time difficult to define or understand. The word *dharma* is from the root *dhṛ*, meaning 'to support' or 'to sustain'. In usage it covers a wide range of meaning from the qualities and characteristics of things to the highest virtue and spiritual effort ; natural characteristics and tendencies, as also what men should do or ought to do. Accordingly, as we shall see from some of the cases discussed below, the statements in *Manu* are to be understood, some as records of facts, some as concessions to such practices as have obtained wide vogue, and some—and this is the most important—as what ought to be done as the most proper thing. A second characteristic of the *dharmas* described in the *Manu Saṁhitā* and other allied texts is that it includes, besides civil, religious, and spiritual matters, counsels of general prudence, safety, and even personal habits, like those of cleanliness, sanitation and civic consciousness, gentlemanly behaviour, courteous and polite ways of conduct, and even other subjects of common sense, making it a guide to conduct in things big and small. Thirdly, a fundamental feature of the concept of *dharma* is that it can be enunciated or understood only as applicable differently to different classes of beings and status of life, and differently to men and women. It is a network of diversified but interrelated duties. Fourthly, it is a consolidating scheme within which practices which are not objectionable and are not opposed to the teachings of the Vedas are included. Even within the fold of the ordained *dharmas* of the four classes (*cāturvarṇya*), all Smṛti writers, including Manu, give a leading place to *ācāra* (accepted conduct) handed down from generation to generation by well-disciplined members of a community.[28] Outside the range of the ordained *dharmas*, there are immemorial customs peculiar to places, to classes, and to families (*deśa*, *jāti*, and *kula*), peculiar to guilds, to communities outside the pale of *cāturvarṇya*, to the *pāṣaṇḍas* (heretics), and to republican groups (*gaṇas*). These, too, are taken into account.[29] A king who is administering justice[30] as well as one consolidating his kingdom in the conquered areas is to see that the local

[28] I. 107-10. [29] I. 118. [30] VIII. 3.

customs are given safeguards and maintained.[31] Fifthly, just as we can speak of *dharma* only with reference to some class or station, and for this reason it is always qualified by person and situation, so also there is a relativity in the concept of *dharma* caused by time and age (*yuga*).[32] The doctrine of *yuga-dharma*, which introduces an element of adaptation and adjustment, has a parallel in the concept of *āpad-dharma*.[33] Concessions in the matter of adopting vocations not normally ordained respectively for Brāhmaṇas and others in emergencies, point to another aspect of the realism and liberalism of the Smṛtis. Lastly, the most important feature of this *dharma* is the inclusion of the spiritual purpose within its scope; the final realization of the Self is not only dealt with as the legitimate and culminating part of it, but the very activities of life here are oriented to, and harmonized with, the spiritual end.

Beginning his account of *dharma* Manu says[34] that there is hardly any activity of man which is not prompted by *kāma* or desire, but to act solely on the urge of desire, which is the outcome of *tamas*[35] (inertia) is not praiseworthy; and so, to enable man to act properly[36] by the control of the activity according to his desire, *dharma* was promulgated. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[37] it is said that *dharma* is stronger than even the Kṣatra (ruling class); there is nothing greater than *dharma*, since it is possible for a weak righteous man to vanquish one who is only physically strong; and this *dharma* is identical with *satya* (truth). As the antecedent of this *dharma* we had in the *Ṛg-Veda* the concept of *ṛta*, the Moral Order.[38] *Dharma* was thus, like the rule of law, something above the ruler, who was also bound by it. To the extent society respected it, society protected itself; to the extent society made inroads into it, to that extent society was also undermining itself.[39] Even in *rāja-dharma* therefore when the relative merit of the Artha-śāstra and the Dharma-śāstra was in question, the latter prevailed over the former.

This *dharma* is governed by the four ends of life, or aims of human endeavour, called the *puruṣārthas*. *Dharma* figures as the first of these *puruṣārthas*. The fourth and highest of these is *mokṣa*, spiritual emancipation; *mokṣa* was included under the first *puruṣārtha*, which was classified into the *dharma* of activity (*pravṛtti-dharma*) and that of retirement (*nivṛtti-dharma*), and the ends were counted as three, the *trivarga*. *Dharma* is the controlling factor, and *artha* and *kāma* are to be subject to it. While some advocate *dharma* and *artha*, or *kāma* and *artha*, or *artha* alone as important,

[31] VIII. 41, 46.
[32] Cf. *Mbh.*, XII. 35. 266, 314, quoted by Bhagavan Das, *Science of Social Organisation Or The Laws of Manu in the Light of Ātmavidyā* (2nd Edn., Adyar, 1932), I. p. 88.
[33] *Manu*, X. 98-118.
[34] II. 2-5.
[35] *Manu*, II. 2.
[36] *Samyag-vṛtti*, I. 5.
[37] I. 4. 11-14.
[38] e.g. *R. V.*, I. 90; IV. 23.
[39] VIII. 15: *dharma eva hato hanti, dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ.*

others would advocate *dharma* alone as good.[40] Although paramount consideration is due to *dharma*, and this view should be accepted, Manu sets out his own view[41] that there should be a balanced pursuit of the *trivarga*. In the second stage of life as the householder, scope has been given to *artha* and *kāma* as regulated by *dharma*, and according to Manu and the general run of Smṛti writers, one should take to the path of *mokṣa* after going through the experiences of life as a householder.

UNIQUENESS OF THE CONCEPTION

There is a uniqueness in the conception of *dharma* according to Manu and others. As pointed out already, there is a lower *dharma* in which a thing is permitted, and a higher *dharma* where refraining from it is considered more meritorious and fruitful. No doubt, this *dharma* is the same as *satya*, but Manu says that for enforcing it, one should not adopt any violent or severe methods; thus the same *dharma* which is *satya* is also *ahiṁsā* (non-violence). This uniqueness is best brought out in the verse:

Satyaṁ brūyāt priyaṁ brūyāt na brūyāt satyaṁ apriyam
Priyaṁ ca nānṛtaṁ brūyāt eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ.[42]

One should speak the truth, but without giving offence, although one should never compromise truth for being nice. In accumulating *dharma* again, one should go about it without causing trouble to any being.[43] It is good to teach *dharma* to the world, but it should be done without hurting people and by using sweet and refined words.[44] Surely, *artha* and *kāma* which are barren of *dharma* should be abandoned; even so a *dharma* which ends up unhappily and is derided by the world.[45] In fact, the *Mahābhārata*, which states more explicitly the idea in Manu, says: *Dharma* is that which is attended by welfare of the world and by non-injury to beings.[46]

The scheme of the classes, their respective *dharmas*, and the obligatory character of the discharge of these, their disinterestd performance being itself considered a perfection to be aimed at—these have inculcated into the Indian mind a strong sense of duty, acceptance of specified work, and voluntary submission to discipline. With this doctrine of duty went the principle of *adhikāra* or qualification. The modern theory of rights, irrespective of *adhikāra*, is something alien to Manu's attitude towards life.

Dharma is also a positive concept. The enunciation of the highest possible ideal, namely, Self-realization and Soul-emancipation, as the goal of *dharma*, further gives a person the longest possible course of progress and ascent to strive for. As the scheme of the *puruṣārthas* includes a

[40] II. 224.
[41] II. 224.
[42] IV. 138.
[43] IV. 238.
[44] II. 159.
[45] IV. 176.
[46] XII. 109. 10, 15.

balanced enjoyment of *artha* and *kāma*, as the ideal of the householder has been held by Manu to be the best one and the basis of the entire living world, and as the final spiritual goal to be attained is also a state of everlasting bliss, there is no room for despondency or pessimism in this scheme. It is one continuous striving, and the Karma theory promises that no good effort made is ever lost.[47] One of the most inspiring verses of Manu states: 'One should not allow one's spirit to be frustrated by earlier failures; one should not disregard oneself; till death one should strive for prosperity and should never consider it difficult of attainment'.[48] It is perhaps this aspect that enthused Nietzsche to exclaim about *Manu Smṛti* that 'it has an affirmation of life, a triumphing, agreeable sensation in life, and that to draw up a lawbook such as Manu means to permit oneself to get the upper hand, to become perfect, to be ambitious of the highest art of living.'

THE SOURCES AND PROOFS OF DHARMA

At the very outset Manu defines the nature of *dharma*. He gives its sources and proofs as four: the Vedas or Śruti, the Smṛti or the recollected traditions as also the conduct[49] of those who know the Vedas, the practice of the good, and the satisfaction of one's own heart or conscience.[50] The qualification given in the second, namely, 'of those who know the Vedas' applies to the third and fourth also. Where for a particular *dharma*, the first source or authority, the Vedas, is not found, the *smṛti* (recollection) and the *śīla* (conduct) of those that know the Vedas are the authority; where for the practices, such as we find in marriage, even *smṛti* source is not found, the *ācāra* of good men is the sanction; where even that is not found, one should do a thing only when one's mind and conscience are pleased at doing it; particularly, when one is faced with two alternatives, one should prefer to do that which is to one's mental satisfaction. The Vedas are the ultimate and overriding authority and where the other three would go against it, they would not be deemed authoritative.[51]

THE CONCEPTION OF THE ŚIṢṬA

As outside of the Vedas, all the three sources, *smṛti*, *ācāra*, and *ātma-tuṣṭi*, turn on the *śiṣṭa*, some attention must be devoted to the conception of a *śiṣṭa*. In the last chapter Manu defines the *śiṣṭa* as a person who has

[47] Cf. *B.G.*, II. 40; VI. 40. [48] IV. 137. [49] *Manu*, II. 6.

[50] As in this, a single individual forms a sanction unto himself, the commentator Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa says that this last sanction is inferior to the second and third where there is the advantage of a consensus of opinion or practice, and possibility of verification by a body of people. It is, of course, the testimony of the heart of one learned in the Vedas and attuned to doing always the proper thing that is counted as the fourth sanction of *dharma*.

[51] Jaimini, *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, I. 3. 3.

studied in the proper manner the whole Vedas together with their supplementary and supporting literature. *Śiṣṭas* are elsewhere defined as those who are left over at the time of the deluge, and who, by virtue of remembering (*smṛti*) the laws of the bygone epoch, are able to reveal them again for the good of mankind.[52] Whatever be its derivation, the term *śiṣṭa* signifies a person of irreproachable character, who is free from desires, and whose acts are not prompted by any worldly motive. A body of *śiṣṭas* would be a *pariṣad* or assembly fit to decide a question of doubt in matters of *dharma*. The *śiṣṭas* form the human medium maintaining and exemplifying the impersonal injunctions to which they give flesh and blood and a practical significance; this presupposes also a set of conditions congenial to their existence. The region where Manu's *dharma* held good, that is, where the *śiṣṭas*, *sats* or *sādhus* were able to keep up the *dharma*, according to his own statement, is an expanding belt which starts with Brahmāvarta, between the Sarasvatī and the Dṛṣadvatī, and embraces the whole of the land between the seas in the east and the west and is called Āryāvarta; in between there is the Brahmarṣi-deśa, comprising the Kurukṣetra, Matsyas, Pāñcālas, and Śūrasenas, and the Madhya-deśa between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, up to Prayāga (Allahabad) in the east. In the course of the history and the movements of peoples, the habitat of a *dharma* shifts, and it becomes a less important factor in the recognition of the *dharma* than the society which provides it with a living substratum. As Medhātithi explains,[53] the land by itself is not reproachful or defective; it is the people who live there and their conduct that determine the Dhārmic or Adhārmic character of a place; if this *dharma* is established in a new territory of Mlecchas, that, too, becomes *yajñīya*, a fit place for the observance of Vedic rites.

SAṀSKĀRA, VARṆA, ĀŚRAMA

The purpose of *dharma* is to uplift man from this physical plane and make him function at higher levels. To fit him for this higher role is to recondition his body and mind. Reference was made at the beginning of this chapter to the analogy of grammar, where the colloquial speech, raw and fluctuating, is pruned, shaped, and systematized for rendering it fit to play a universal and higher role. The *saṁskāras* of the Dharma-śāstra play the same part. As Kālidāsa says: The body as it is born is like the raw stone from the mines, and the *saṁskāras* are like the grinding and polish that it gets at the hands of the gem-cutter;[54] the result is, as in the case of the gem, that the person who has undergone *saṁskāras* shines with a new

[52] *Mat. P.*, CXLV: *manvantareṣu ye śiṣṭāḥ.*
[53] In his commentary on *Manu*, II. 23.
[54] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 18.

glow and lustre. Aṅgiras, in his *Smṛti*, employs an analogy from the art of painting and says that as by the application of several colours a form is brought out in a picture, even so by *saṁskāras* the real personality, Brāhmaṇahood etc., of man is brought out.[55] With the *saṁskāras* done, one on the stage of *dharma* appears as if in a new make-up and a different person; he has, as the texts say, taken a second birth, and is now called *dvija*, the twice-born. To quote Manu: 'With the holy Vedic rites, the sanctifying acts which purify the body (*śarīra-saṁskāra*) are to be done; by these oblations and other acts, the impurities of the seed and the uterus are wiped off, and by the rites of initiation and the austerities connected with study of the Vedas, oblations, and other sacrificial acts, the body undergoes a spiritual transformation; it becomes capable of helping to realize the Supreme Being.'[56]

The *saṁskāras*, with some differences of details, are common to the three classes, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya, all of whom are called, for this reason, *dvijas*. The fourth is called *eka-jāti*, meaning thereby that he has no sacramental rebirth, but actually the text says[57] that the Śūdras may, if they want to acquire merit, follow in the footsteps of the *dvijas*, and do certain rites, the five daily sacrifices etc., without the *mantras*. The fact that they are done without *mantras* does not deprive them of effect, for the women of the higher classes, too, go through these without *mantras*.[58]

The *saṁskāras* cover the whole life of an individual. Manu does not specify the total number of the *saṁskāras*; different Smṛti works specify their number differently; while Gautama gives the largest number, forty, the principal ones are sixteen. Some of these are of greater importance and form landmarks in the life of the person; *niṣeka* or *garbhādhāna* relates to proper conception and is the very basis of life. *Jātakarman* is performed at birth. Of those that follow, *upanayana* or initiation is of foremost importance; it is indeed the symbol of all *saṁskāras* and may well be the last in some cases, as some persons may not elect to marry. Without *upanayana*, the *dvija* becomes deprived of initiation into the adoration of the *gāyatrī*, and Manu says that without it he is no better than a *vrātya* (outcast).[59]

The initiation and Vedic studies cover the first of the four stages or *āśramas* called the *brahmacarya*, literally cultivation of the Vedas; as a

[55] *Citrakarma yathānekaiḥ raṅgair unmīlyate śanaiḥ.*
Brāhmaṇyam api tadvat syāt saṁskāraiḥ vidhipūrvakaiḥ.

[56] II. 26-28.

[57] *Manu*, X. 127.

[58] *Manu*, II. 66. Many Smṛti writers allow *saṁskāras* without *mantras* for Śūdras, Vyāsa allows as many as ten *saṁskāras*, and others more. Interesting information on the *saṁskāras* of Śūdras may be found in works like the *Śūdra-kamalākara*.

[59] *Ibid.*, II. 39.

person does this in boyhood and as a bachelor, and in this stage of studentship he eschews strictly all kinds of sense pleasures and attractions, the term *brahmacarya* means also celibacy and continence. At the end of the studentship, the first *āśrama*, there is the ceremony of *samāvartana* or *snāna* bringing the life with the teacher to a close. The treatment of *brahmacarya* and *upanayana* embodies the ancient ideals of education, and the description, in Chapter II, of the discipline to be observed by the student and the conditions of life in a teacher's establishment (*guru-kula*) contains several seminal ideas which would be of profit to educationists of all ages.

After the *brahmacarya* stage, one may elect to enter the next stage of the householder (*gṛhasthāśrama*). As the greater part of the *dharmas* ordained by the Śāstra, including the sacrifices, big and small, have to be performed with a wife, as the *brahmacārins* and *sannyasins* have to live with the help of the householder, and as his life, with all its duties to the gods, sages, and fellow-beings, forms an excellent ground for the discipline of the body and the mind, this stage of life, the *gṛhasthāśrama*, has always been eulogized in the Smṛtis.[60] The glorification of the ideal of a disciplined *gṛhastha*, holding it out as the proper course for the bulk of the people, gives the lie direct to the criticism that Hinduism is negative, pessimistic, and other-worldly.

In the treatment of the *gṛhasthāśrama*, Manu deals also with marriage, which is a major and central *saṁskāra* with which the organization of *varṇa* (caste) is inseparably bound. As in the case of other activities based on desire, marriage, too, is made into a *saṁskāra* in order to sublimate this most important aspect of human relationship. This institution again has been conceived as an instrument of *dharma* and meant for the discharge of ordained duties. Hence one could marry only a woman of one's own *varṇa*, but of a different *gotra* (clan).[61] This condition is in the best interest of eugenics, and ensures the purity of the line and the elimination of defects of the species. On the whole, Manu recognizes eight kinds of marriage, *brāhma, daiva, ārṣa, prājāpatya, āsura, gāndharva, rākṣasa,* and *paiśāca*.[62] It is in the first four that excellent and virtuous issues are born.[63] Not only the way of marrying and the kind of wife, but the choice of proper times for cohabitation, regulated by several considerations, gives best results.[64]

During the household life, men are enabled to discharge the three debts with which they are born—the debt to the gods, to be discharged

[60] *Ibid.*, III. 77, 78; VI. 87, 89-90.
[61] *Ibid.*, III. 5.
[62] *Ibid.*, III. 21.
[63] *Ibid.*, III. 39, 40.
[64] *Ibid.*, III. 45-59.

by performing sacrifices; the debt to the *ṛṣis* (sages), by maintaining the study and teaching of the Vedas and allied learning; and the debt to the ancestors (*pitars*), by begetting children. Daily, the householder should also do five propitiations (*yajñas*): Of these the first, *brahma-yajña*, relates to the maintenance of learning and its tradition; *pitṛ-yajña* is the offering of water (*tarpaṇa*) for the gratification of one's ancestors; *deva-yajña* consists of the oblations in the fire for the gods; *bhūta-yajña* is the offering made to living beings, animals, birds, etc.; *nṛ-yajña* is the reception and attention paid to guests (*atithi-pūjana*).[65] The ancestors are to be further propitiated by *śrāddhas* (memorial rites).[66] It is after feeding the guests and those dependent on them in and around the home that the husband and wife shall themselves eat.[67] He who cooks for himself alone eats sin, not food.[68]

In respect of the means of livelihood also, Manu's picture of the householder is noteworthy. Manu's code presents to us the picture of a high-minded person of simple habits, free from greed and the tendency to hoard. The means of livelihood resorted to should involve the least harm to anyone.[69] The householder should gather only so much as is necessary for sustenance, his accumulations being just for the morrow, or for three days only, or only so much as a jar or a granary could contain.[70] He should not receive gifts from unworthy persons, nor choose to eat at their places.[71] In fine, he should be soft and controlled, at the same time firm and resolute in action, having no truck with those who behave in a callous manner, himself harming none; restrained in himself and generous to others, he gains heaven.[72] To this picture of goodness and strength, the lining of beauty may also be added, for this picture of Manu's *gṛhastha* is not of an emaciated, sullen, untidy person; the householder shall not, when able to avoid it, mortify himself with starvation, nor put on tattered or dirty clothes; he should have his hair cut, nails clipped, and face shaved, wear white cloth, and be clean.[73] One cannot fail to be struck by the exalted and at the same time radiant humanism of Manu's conception of the householder.

The care taken over marriage and the sublimity of daily domestic life and habits ensure the purity of line of the families, *kulas*. It is these *kulas* and the high character of private life in them that have formed the citadels of Hindu culture. But these *kulas* would come to ruin by

[65] *Ibid.*, III. 68-81.
[66] *Ibid.*, III. 122, 285.
[67] *Ibid.*, III. 116-7.
[68] *Ibid.*, III. 118.
[69] *Ibid.*, IV. 2.
[70] *Ibid.*, IV. 3, 7.
[71] *Ibid.*, IV. 84-91, 186, 190, 191, 205-24.
[72] *Ibid.*, IV. 246. No wonder Bāṇa in the *Harṣa-carita* calls the ideal householders sages at home (*gṛha-munayaḥ*).
[73] *Ibid.*, IV. 34-5.

indiscreet marriages, by neglect of ordained *dharmas*, by taking attractive and lucrative professions—all of which corrupt; by indulgence in promiscuous sexual relationships with lower classes, by gathering about one possessions such as animals and vehicles, and by seeking government service.[74]

The third and fourth *āśramas*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, are dealt with below under the spiritual quest in *Manu*.

The duties of kings (*rāja-dharma*) form a legitimate part of the Dharma-śāstras, as the king is the second of the four *varṇas*, and as on his rule and administration the carrying on of the world depends. The conception of the king's position and activity in a Dharma-śāstra text like Manu's will be subject to the general ideology of *dharma*, which on some matters may not hit off with the view taken in a pure Artha-śāstra text; attention has already been drawn to the dictum that in case there is conflict between the Dharma- and Artha-śāstras, the former would prevail.

Manu says that it is difficult to find a pure man,[75] and hence punishment (*daṇḍa*) was created by the Lord to protect *dharma*, so that out of fear, all beings might conduct themselves properly.[76] The human embodiment of that principle is the king, and he is the guarantor of *dharma*.[77] He is the time and epoch, as on him depends whether *dharmas* would be maintained or would undergo change.[78] The gods have imparted to each king his aspect,[79] so that in protecting people, he is verily a divine representative.[80]

The king should have undergone the same Vedic *saṁskāras* and disciplines as the Brāhmaṇa.[81] He should be free from the vices of desire,[82] be pure and truthful,[83] and controlled in senses.[84] While the treatment of the fort, minister, counsel, the four expedients, the six forms of diplomacy, espionage, etc., is the same here as in works of polity, there are some points on which, as a Dharma-śāstra text, *Manu Smṛti* lays an emphasis on *dharma*.[85] A code of war called *dharma-yuddha* is set forth,[86] according to which deceitful or poisonous arms shall not be used, a foe in a disadvantageous position shall not be struck; one who has surrendered shall be given security, one fleeing, armless, non-combatant, or engaged with another shall not be attacked. As in a war victory is always doubtful, the

[74] *Ibid.*, III. 63, 64.
[75] *Ibid.*, VII. 22: *durlabho hi śucir naraḥ.*
[76] *Ibid.*, VII. 14, 15.
[77] *Ibid.*, VII. 17.
[78] *Ibid.*, IV. 301: *rāja hi yugam ucyate.*
[79] *Ibid.*, IX. 303-11.
[80] *Ibid.*, IX. 4-8.
[81] *Ibid.*, VII. 2.
[82] *Ibid.*, VII. 45-7, 50.
[83] *Ibid.*, VII. 31.
[84] *Ibid.*, VII. 44.
[85] It is this *dharma-vijaya* of kings called *rājarṣis* that the epics and *mahā-kāvyas* like those of Kālidāsa depict.
[86] *Manu*, VII. 90-94.

king should try to avoid a war.[87] Manu speaks also at length about the king's administration of justice[88] under eighteen titles of law.[89] Although the treatment of civil law here is not so advanced as in *Nārada* or *Yājñavalkya,* it is fairly detailed and touches most of the essential points. Under inheritance, it may be noted that Manu's special view is recorded that there are twelve kinds of legal sons.[90] One of the duties of the king is called *kaṇṭaka-śodhana,* which is clearing the state of anti-social elements. The king should be impartial and punish those dear to him as he would do others.[91] There is no blind exercise of regal power; the Kṣatra shall always be guided and guarded by the Brāhmaṇa;[92] the marriage of the temporal and the spiritual is emphasized here also.

A word might be added about Vaiśyas and Śūdras. The fields of commerce and labour, which now sway the whole world and shake and shape governments, it may be noted, receive meagre notice in Dharma-śāstra. Manu describes these two *varṇas* very briefly.[93]

CASTE, UNTOUCHABILITY, WOMEN

We find the four castes among the Iranians also (Atharvan for Brāhmaṇa, Rathesthar for Kṣatriya, Vastrya Fsuyant for Vaiśya, and Huiti for Śūdra). The organization of society into these functional classes, four or three or two is of common Indo-Germanic origin, and its parallel could be sought in all ancient communities.[94] Caste has been discussed perhaps more than any other subject recently. The expression 'caste' is foreign and cannot be said to describe exactly the social organization called *varṇa.* At the same time, it is difficult to know the exact meaning of the word *varṇa* in its earliest usages in the *Ṛg-Veda,* although it is usual for scholars to take it as indicating colour. The *Ṛg-Veda* knows the *varṇa* system as inclusive of its hereditory character.[95] The hereditory character of the classes is also clinched by the use of the word *jāti* as a synonym of *varṇa.* Stray cases like that of Viśvāmitra and the incidence of *kṣatriya-pravaras* among Brāhmaṇical *gotras* show a kind of fluidity, but do not prove the total absence of the hereditory character of the *varṇa.* Even in *Manu* the distinction is made of a *jāti-Brāhmaṇa,* devoid of *vratas* and attainments,[96] who may not be included in the *pariṣad,* and this together with

Ibid., VII. 199.

Ibid., VIII. 4-7.

[89] *Ibid.*, Chs. VIII and IX.

[90] *Ibid.*, IX. 158-60.

Ibid., IX. 307. Cf. Kālidāsa, *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 28.

Ibid., IX. 322.

[93] *Ibid.*, IX. 325-35.

Cf. J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India* (Oxford, 1951), Part III, pp. 133-47, Analogous Institutions Elsewhere; G. H. Mees, *Dharma and Society*, pp. 75-85. Plato and Aristotle also spoke of this classification.

[95] See Keith, *Cambridge History of India*, I. pp. 93-4. In Egypt it was hereditary; cf. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[96] VIII. 20; XII. 114.

expressions like *brāhmaṇa-bruva* and *brahma-bandhu* confirm the birth-basis of the *varṇa*. The statement of the *Gītā* does not warrant the assumption that according to one's *guṇa* and *karma*, one may either oneself or through some friends declare oneself as a Brāhmaṇa or Kṣatriya ; the basis of *guṇa-karma* is to explain the rationale of the fourfold classification.

The organization according to *varṇa* has served as a steel frame that has preserved the Hindu community down the centuries. Its marriage-selection and vocational specialization have contributed to the refinement of the species[97] and the conservation and perfection of its skill ; they have eliminated confusion, perplexity, and wastage. According to Sidney Low, 'There is no doubt that it (caste) is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of Nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, . . . it protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations . . . the caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, . . . there are no workhouses in India and none are as yet needed.'[98] Abbé Dubois considered the institution of caste among the Hindu nation as the happiest effort of their legislation. Meredith Townsend characterized caste as 'a marvellous discovery, a form of socialism which through ages protected Hindu society from anarchy and from the worst evils of industrial and competitive life'. 'It is the only social system', says S. C. Hill,[99] 'ever proposed upon a basis stronger than force' and 'is entirely independent of any form of political government'. 'No serious student of caste will propagate the abolishment of the caste-system.'[100]

The *varṇa* organization is not like classes of today formed on material aims and competitive basis. It forms a co-operative effort. Its working can be best understood on the analogy of an orchestra and a harmonic composition, in which there are a number of complementary parts separately written and assigned to different instruments ; to each his part, whatever its nature,[101] is important, and all fit into an artistic whole. This is the doctrine of *svadharma* and the basis of *cāturvarṇya*, in which every class, by the perfection of its part, is 'an aristocracy of quality' and 'every vocation

[97] Sedgwick (*Report on the Census of Bombay*, 1921) points out that the Indian caste system with its endogamous caste and exogamous *gotras* is a perfect method of preserving what is called in genetics the 'pure line'. See Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

[98] Cf. Kane, *H. Dh.*, II. pp. 20-2.

[99] *People of India* ; quoted by Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[100] G. H. Mees, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

[101] Cf. *Rām.*, I. 1. 14: *rakṣitā svasya dharmasya*, and II. 1. 16: *kṣātraṁ dharmaṁ svayaṁ bahu-mānyate*.

a priesthood'.[102] The so-called exaltation of the Brāhmaṇa is balanced by the more onerous duties and more severe standards expected of him; the *varṇa-dharmas* show that, as we go lower, *dharmas* are less and lighter. There is no sin for a Śūdra, as stated by *Manu* in X. 126. Equality such as is expounded in the present ballot-box *yuga*, in which there is a levelling down, was of course not part of the *varṇa* scheme, which was hierarchic in conception. Intellectual, moral, and spiritual attainments on the part of the members of the lower classes were always recognized by those of the higher; the Kṣatriya philosophers of the Upaniṣads, the Vaiśya Tulādhāra, Vidura, and the hunter-philosopher of the epics and the Purāṇas, and the mediaeval saints who were drawn from the lowest classes, were all accepted and revered by the higher classes including the Brāhmaṇa.[103] Any sense of difference of the higher and the lower was offset by the strong belief that in the eyes of God, or from the point of view of the Supreme Brahman which indwells all beings, all were *essentially* equal. Further, the Karma theory shifted the basis of lower birth from the person proper to a principle, and guaranteed that with acculturation and consequent improvement in the acts done, ascent in the hierarchic *varṇa* scheme could always be had in the course of some births. This provided a healthy incentive for moral advancement. As G. H. Mees says, 'There will be always higher rungs to be reached by him in the natural hierarchy. *Dharma* always holds out further prospects in the distance.'[104]

Manu, as also other *dharma* authorities, speak of a number of classes of persons born of certain types of sexual relation of both *anuloma* (wife of a lower caste) and *pratiloma* (husband from an inferior caste) type,[105] and some of these issues are given names which are also the names of certain tribes outside the pale of the *cāturvarṇya*—Niṣāda, Caṇḍāla, Ābhīra, Pukkasa, and the rest. It cannot be said that the entire tribes known by these names were born of such sexual relationship. What was actually done was that, in respect of lack of *dharma*, these offspring of improper alliances were considered suitable for alignment with those tribes. On the other side, this theory, and the one that holds that all the *vrātyas* and *mlecchas* were really those who had lapsed from the *varna* ideal, served to draw on to the fringes of the *varṇa* system the numerous tribal communities and assign them all a place in the society. The *varṇa* organization

[102] See A. K. Commaraswami, *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society etc.* (New York, 1946), pp. 39-40. In matters of education and vocational training, the diversified courses of study adopted by modern educationalists come only to the same principle of *varṇa*, though partially.

[103] Cf. *Manu*, II. 136-7, on persons in all *varṇas* to whom respects are due.

[104] G. H. Mees, *Dharma and Society*, p. 188. See also *Manu*, X. 64; a regular hypermarriage of a Śūdra woman with a Brāhmaṇa for seven generations makes for Brāhmaṇahood.

[105] *Manu*, X. 8-52.

served in this respect to impose an order on the heterogenous population and consolidate it. Says Hutton:[106] '. . . one important function of caste, perhaps the most important of all its functions, and the one which above all others makes caste in India a unique institution, is, or has been, to integrate Indian society, to weld into one community the . . . groups composing it . . . some of these groups have been occupational or religious. Others, and this is more important, have been national, political and tribal societies that must otherwise have either been absorbed or transformed or remained as unadjusted and possibly subversive elements. . . . The caste system has effectively dealt with problems such as these, which other societies have failed to solve.'

Manu says[107] that there is no fifth *varṇa*, and therefore all the mixed *jātis* described by him are to be taken as included under the fourth *varṇa*. He refers to Caṇḍālas, Śvapacas, and certain others as living outside the village, *bahir-grāma*, though they too belonged to the same (fourth *varṇa*). The idea of their untouchability must have grown from their segregation to the fringes of the villages, their filthy habits and food. Primitive clans and tribes in various parts of the world are known to have perished by contact with other immigrant races, owing to lack of immunity or resistance to racial contamination. The idea of untouchability must have entered the system for similar reasons, and Smṛti writers interested in the *varṇa-dharma* based on a religious philosophy cannot be blamed for its creation, aggravation, or enforcement.

Regarding the position of women, a text frequently cited in *na strī svātantryaṁ arhati* (woman is not fit for freedom).[108] In the ideology of Manu and Dharma-śāstra, the home and the family constitute the bed-rock of society, and woman is the person on whom the stability and sanctity of the home and household life rest; the wife is the home, not the structure: *na gṛhaṁ gṛhaṁ ityāhuḥ, gṛhiṇī gṛhaṁ ucyate*. Manu and other ancient Indian thinkers had also a conception of women according to which they did not like women to be exposed to the rough and tumble of an unprotected, independent life; and it is in this spirit that Manu says that a woman shall always be taken care of by someone—by her father in her girlhood, by her husband in her youth, by her son in her old age, and that she should not be left to herself.[109] The woman may not go about earning herself, but Manu says[110] that she should be entrusted with the husbanding

[106] *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.
[107] *Ibid.*, X. 4.
[108] *Ibid.*, X. 36, 39, 50, 51.
[109] 'In ancient Greece at no time of her life could a woman be without a guardian. If her father was not alive, it would be her nearest male relative. . . . After her husband's death, her son was her guardian.' G. Tucker, *Life in Ancient Athens*, quoted by Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer, *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals* (Kamala Lectures, Calcutta, 1935), p. 57.
[110] *Manu*, IX. 11.

of the financial and material resources of the home; with collecting and spending. There is no difference between the housewife and the Goddess of Fortune; both illumine the home and are to be adored as such.[111] Everyone in the house, the parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, and husband, shall honour her, and keep her happy and bedecked, if they want to prosper.[112] Where women are honoured, there the gods revel, where they are not honoured, all religious acts become futile;[113] that home perishes in which the daughter-in-law suffers; homes cursed by them come to grief.[114] In that home in which husband and wife are mutually happy, there is invariable auspiciousness.[115] No religious rite could be performed without the wife. Indeed the husband and wife are one.[116] As mother, she takes precedence over the father in receiving respect—a higher encomium cannot be showered on women. The recognition of a large variety of marriages, and of different kinds of sons and provisions for them, shows the practical and liberal attitude of Manu and his consideration for women in general.[117] It is sin for relatives to take away the *strīdhana* (property exclusively belonging to a wife) which a woman has received.[118] The statement that a woman has no property of her own[119] has no reference to *strīdhana*, which is hers; property, according to Dharma-śāstra, is that which helps one to perform an enjoined Dharmic act, and as a woman has no such acts to perform, the property other than *strīdhana* which she may earn, could only be her husband's, who alone can perform the rites.[120] A girl may remain a spinster, rather than her father shall give her in marriage to a worthless man.[121] If within three years of attaining age, her father is not able to find her a suitable husband, she might herself seek one.[122]

Critics of women's position as set out above should note that they are indulging in unfair comparisons when they judge conditions in ancient India from the point of view of conditions which have come to prevail only in recent times in the West. Till recently, the position of women there was hardly praiseworthy,[123] whereas the Indian lawgivers in those remote ages of antiquity had great regard and consideration for women. Strictures on women in Manu and elsewhere should not so prejudice us as not to note the high praise bestowed on them, and we should understand the condemnatory passages, according to the well-known Mīmāṁsā rule of

[111] *Ibid.*, IX. 26. [112] *Ibid.*, III. 55.
[113] *Ibid.*, III. 56. [114] *Ibid.*, III. 57, 58.
[115] *Ibid.*, III. 60. [116] *Ibid.*, IX. 45.
[117] Certain other Smṛtis go even further and condone their sexual lapses.
[118] *Manu*, III. 51, 54; X. 198. [119] *Ibid.*, VIII. 416.
[120] See Kullūka on *Manu*, VIII. 416.
[121] *Manu*, IX. 89. [122] *Ibid.*, IX. 90.
[123] See P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 63, 65, the last page especially where the quotations are given to show that till comparatively recent times women in England could be beaten with a stick by their husbands.

interpretation, that the real intention of the condemnation is to praise the opposite, namely, the greatness of chastity (*pātivratya*). On questions like the field of activity proper to women, the special training they should have, and so on, even modern thinkers hold divergent opinions.

A word may be added about Manu's stand on the questions of widow-remarriage and divorce. On such questions, it is sometimes difficult to be dogmatic, as Manu, as well as other Smṛti writers, adopt three standpoints, the first recording what is obtaining in the world as a result of *kāma*, the second conceding to some extent as a result of the vogue, and the third stating his personal or ideal opinion. In some passages, Manu *records* the existence of sons of widows[124] and marriages of girls who had secretly conceived;[125] at one place[126] a girl whose proposed husband passes away before the actual marriage, or one whose marriage has not been consummated, is allowed further marriage. But he says that for the virtuous widow, *sādhvī*, there is no second marriage[127] or raising of issue by another, that the Vedic marriage *mantras* are only for maidens,[128] and that marriage is only for once.[129] As for divorce, Manu has no passage advocating, supporting, or conceding separation in any form; he emphasizes that there is no kind of separation, and marriage is indissoluble for life.[130]

NOT MECHANICAL, BUT MORAL AND ETHICAL BASIS OF DHARMA

A criticism likely to be made against Manu's *dharma* is that it is rather mechanical and consists mostly in the adherence to or observing of a set of prescribed duties and sacraments for different types of men. Nothing could be farther from the truth than such an opinion. For not only do the prescribed duties themselves have a bearing on morality, but in addition to the scheme of *saṁskāras* and ordained observances for such classes of persons, Manu emphasizes a body of personal ethical virtues as of fundamental importance and universal application. Whatever a Brāhmaṇa might observe or not observe, he should be essentially one who is friendly to all, *maitra*.[131] Some of the daily rites included in the five daily *yajñas* have a social and humanitarian bearing; for example, the *nṛ-yajña*, which is the entertaining of guests, and *bhūta-yajña*, which is the gratification of other living beings, dogs, insects, etc.[132] He whose speech and thought are pure and under control attains the highest spiritual fruit.[133] One should not touch the sore spots of another, never intend harm nor utter that unwholesome

[124] *Manu*, III. 174; IX. 175.
[125] *Ibid.*, IX. 69, 176.
[126] *Ibid.*, VIII. 226.
[127] *Ibid.*, IX. 46, 101.
[128] *Ibid.*, III. 90-3.
[129] *Ibid.*, IX. 172-73.
[130] *Ibid.*, V. 162.
[131] *Ibid.*, IX. 47.
[132] *Ibid.*, II. 87.
[133] *Ibid.*, II. 160.

word which will make another shudder.[134] The householder should see that he causes no harm to others nor displease others even by begging of them.[135] Crooked and deceitful ways of livelihood must be eschewed.[136] Hatred, vanity, pride, anger, and severity should be avoided.[137] Of the two sets of virtues and observances, *yamas* and *niyamas,* the former are more important and must be always observed ;[138] the *yamas* are continence, compassion, contemplation, truth, non-attachment, non-violence, not taking what is anothers', sweetness of behaviour, and self-control. One wins heaven by being soft and subdued, non-violent and generous.[139] Apart from the special *dharmas* of the respective *varṇas*, there are ten personal qualities, *ātma-guṇas*, which are insisted upon by Manu as the *sāmānya-dharmas* for all, irrespective of class or station. These ten qualities or *dharmas* are:[140] fortitude, forbearance, self-control, not taking others' possessions, purity, sense-control, learning, knowledge of the Self, truth, and absence of anger. Similarly, he mentions[141] five virtues as constituting the common *dharmas* of all the four *varṇas*—non-violence, truth, non-thieving, purity, and sense-control.

The purpose of a ceremonial manner of expiation is to make one's sin public, thereby making one feel ashamed of it and refrain from doing it again. 'A sinner gets purified of his sin by making it public, by repentance, by penance, and by sacred study. As the sinner goes about telling people of the wrong committed by him, the sin falls away from him, even as a slough from a snake. To the extent his own mind derides him for having admitted the sin, to that extent his body becomes rid of that sin. By repentance, by the resolve that he will not repeat it, the sinner is purified. For any act which leaves no peace of mind, one shall submit oneself to voluntary austerity till one gains mental peace.'[142] Thus what is intended in expiation is a real mental transformation.

Outside of the Veda-enjoined sacrifices, the principle of *ahiṁsā* should be observed in all matters ; and Manu lays due emphasis on the two basic principles—*ahiṁsā* and *satya*. Water may wash the body, but it is truth that cleanses the mind ;[143] one should speak words purified by truth, do acts purified by conscience.[144] *Dharma* flourishes through truth.[145] If one can make it up with one's own heart and conscience, wherein is seated the Lord of Judgement, Yama, one no more needs holy waters or places of

[134] *Ibid.*, II. 161.

[135] *Ibid.*, IV. 2. Manu's words here are *adroha* and *alpa-droha*, and Medhātithi interprets the latter as begging of others.

[136] *Ibid.*, IV. 11.

[137] *Ibid.*, IV. 163.

[138] *Ibid.*, IV. 204.

[139] *Ibid.*, IV. 246.

[140] *Ibid.*, VI. 92.

[141] *Ibid.*, X. 63.

[142] *Ibid.*, XI. 227-33.

[143] *Ibid.*, V. 109.

[144] *Ibid.*, VI. 46.

[145] *Ibid.*, VIII. 83.

pilgrimage.[146] Also, universal benevolence and friendliness are commended; 'Insult not others, nor make enmity with anyone.'[147]

A TREASURY OF WISDOM

If the *Manu Smṛti* is not a mere code of ordained duties, and if it rises in its philosophical parts to grave dignity, it ranks high also as a masterpiece of ancient literature which in pithy and effective couplets gives expression to some of the most precious ideas and noblest virtues and ideals. No appreciation of Manu can be complete without drawing attention to its *subhāṣitas* or observations of profound wisdom. Some of these could be cited: One does not become an elder by reason of one's grey hairs, he who is well read, though young, him the gods deem an elder.[148] The good should be taught to people without hurting them; one who desires merit should use his words sweetly and delicately.[149] He who is insulted goes to sleep happily, and happily does he get up and move about in the world; it is he who has insulted that perishes.[150] Contentment is the root of happiness, its opposite is the root of misery.[151] Whatever makes one dependent on another is misery, and all that helps to rest on oneself is happiness; this in short is the definition of happiness and misery.[152] That in doing which one has an inner satisfaction should be done, even if it requires some effort; the opposite should be avoided.[153] Of all kinds of cleanliness, that in monetary affairs is the greatest; he who is pure in this is really clean; he who is cleansed by water etc. is not really clean.[154] *Dharma* is the only friend that accompanies one even in death; all the rest perishes with the body.[155] One's self is one's witness, it is the final resort; do not disregard your own self, the greatest witness of man.[156]

VĀNAPRASTHA, SANNYĀSA, SPIRITUAL QUEST

Manu's treatment of the spiritual quest is permeated with the terms and ideas of philosophical literature.[157] This subject cannot be considered

Ibid., VIII. 92.
Ibid., II. 156.
Ibid., II. 163.
Ibid., IV. 160.
Ibid., V. 106.
Ibid., VIII. 84.

[147] *Ibid.*, VI. 47.
[149] *Ibid.*, II. 159.
[151] *Ibid.*, IV. 12.
[153] *Ibid.*, IV. 161.
[155] *Ibid.*, VIII. 17.

The Vedānta or Upaniṣad, its study, repeating it (*svādhyāya* and *japa*), the truth taught therein and its fruit are referred to in II. 160, VI. 81, 83 and 94. Brahman, the Absolute of the Upaniṣads, Its exponents (*Brahma-vādins*) and Its realization are mentioned in I. 81, 83; VI. 39, 79 (*Brahma sanātanam*), 81, 85; XII. 13, 123 (*Brahma śāśvatam*), 125, as also the terms Ātman, Adhyātma, Parama, Puruṣa, Antarātman, Paramātman in VI 49 (*ātma-rati*), 63, 65, 73, 80, 93, 96; XII. 92, 118, 119, 122; the distinctions into (*kṣetrajña*, *bhūtātman*, *jīvātman* are to be seen in XII. 12, 13, 14. *Samyagdarśana*, *jñāna*, *ātma-jñāna* are seen in VI. 74; XII. 85, 92. *Mokṣa*, *mukta*, *parama-gati*, *parama-padam*, *sukham*, *śāśvatam*, *svārājya*, *amṛtatva*, *Brahma-bhūya*, *niḥśreyasa* could be seen in VI. 35, 37, 44, 58, 60; XII. 82, 83, 88, 91, 102, 103, 104, 107, 125. The differentiation into *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*, worldly welfare and the everlasting good, is met with in XII. 88. The Yogic process of breath-control

extraneous to Manu's work. The very genius of the Hindu scheme of life here is that it is synthesized with that in the hereafter; for this a picture of the whole cosmogony, creation, after-life, etc. is necessary; without such a background, the principles enunciated by Manu, the distinctions, diversified duties, the theory of Karma etc.. cannot be understood. In the scheme of the four stages of life, the latter two concern a life of retirement. In both these respects the treatment of philosophy is quite germane to the text. Apart from this, Manu has been remembered as the promulgator of a philosophy.[158] The philosophical texts also count Manu among the teachers of philosophy.[159]

The viewpoint adopted by Manu is that of the Vedānta, incorporating into it, in the manner of the epics and the Purānas, elements of the Sāṁkhya system. The world has been created by the self-manifest and transcendent reality which is the Soul of everything,[160] the eternal Ultimate Cause which is of the form of existence as well as non-existence.[161] The body is not a physical entity, but a habitation of the Supreme Self.[162] All beings born are the products of *karma*, and it is with the impressions of past *karma* that beings attain new birth. To distinguish between *karma*, good and bad, the Lord created *dharma* and *adharma*.[163] As beings are born according to their heritage of *karma*, they are naturally of diverse natures, and in order that the world might grow and prosper and might be well-protected under some system that the Lord determined the distinction of these into four *varṇas* with their respective duties.[164] In accordance with the *Vedānta Sūtras*[165] Manu says that all this creative activity of the Lord is His sport, *līlā*.[166]

Although the spiritual goal has been given its due place in the Dharmaśāstra ideology, it should be noted that the special viewpoint of Dharmaśāstras is that, normally, man should discharge his duties and debts as a householder, and then, with a duly disciplined mind, mature and free from sins and attachments, think of a life of retirement. Manu says[167] that it

(*prāṇāyāma*), *dhāraṇā*, the *yamas* and *niyamas*, Dhyāna-yoga, Karma-yoga may be seen in I. 83; IV. 204; VI. 70-73, 79, 82, 83. Ratiocination (*tarka*), the three means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and Śāstra (Āgama, Śabda) are spoken of in XII. 105-6.
(Here all the references are from *Manu*).

[158] *B. G.*, IV. 1.

[159] *Brahma-Sūtras*, III. 1. 14, and Śaṅkara thereon. In his *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara quotes *Manu* about seven times, and it is to be specially noted that in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara quotes some of the philosophically important verses of *Manu* viz, on I. 4. 6, *Manu*, XII. 123, I. 7, and XII. 50; on I. 4. 15, *Manu*, II. 87; on IV. 5, 6, *Manu*, VI. 38 on *pravrajyā*, and II. 16.

[160] *Manu*, I. 3-7. *Manu*, I. 7 has been quoted by Śaṅkara in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*.

[161] *Manu*, I. 8.

[162] *Ibid.*, I. 17, 18: *Tasya-mūrtiḥ*.

[163] *Ibid.*, I. 26, 28-30.

[164] *Ibid.*, I. 31, 87.

[165] *Ibid.*, II. 1. 33.

[166] *Ibid.*, I. 80: *krīḍanniva etat kurute Parameṣṭhī punaḥ punaḥ*.

[167] *Ibid.*, VI. 35-7.

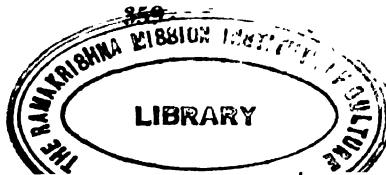
is only after discharging the three debts that one should direct one's mind towards *mokṣa* ; to do otherwise is sinful. This is called the *samuccaya-vada* or theory of co-ordination of the *āśramas*, as against the view of Upaniṣads like the *Jābāla*, which also advocate *sannyāsa* directly from *brahmacarya*. Life is accordingly mapped out by the Dharma-śāstras in four stages, and the latter two stages, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, refer to retirement.[168] When wrinkles and grey hair appear in a person and a grandson has also appeared in the house, it is time for a householder to retire, and he should leave the village and go to the forest ; he may go either with his wife or leaving her in the care of his sons, but in the forest he should live a life of continence and abstinence from sense-enjoyments.[169] In this stage of forest life, he would perform rites like the *agnihotra*, but would otherwise, in dress, food, etc., live the life of a recluse, subsisting on roots, fruits and water, constantly engaged in the study of the scriptures, subdued, friendly to all, composed, giving but never receiving, compassionate towards all beings,[170] bearing everything,[171] and engaged in austerities.[172]

He then passes to the next stage, that of a *parivrājaka*, which would roughly cover the fourth part of his life.[173] He takes into himself, so to say, the sacrificial fires and moves out of his habitation.[174] He should keep moving on till his body falls.[175] By such control of the senses, extinction of likes and dislikes and non-violence towards all beings, one becomes qualified to attain to immortality.[176] Practising control of breath and contemplation, he should see the course of the self through high and low births, through regions of heaven and hell, through the pleasures and miseries of life.[177] Manu is one with the Vedānta on some of the fundamental tenets ; for instance, firstly, knowledge, *jñāna*, alone is capable of giving *mokṣa* ; anything that might be done without the knowledge of the Self will be futile ;[178] it is knowledge that bestows immortality.[179] Secondly, the Absolute Brahman is the One Truth, and it is This that is called by the various names through which, in different ways, different aspirants adore It.[180] It is again with a disquisition on the spiritual goal and the means to attain it that Manu closes his exposition of *dharma*.[181] Of all knowledge, that of the Self is the greatest ;[182] the observance of *dharmas* of activity (*pravṛtti*) could at best take one to the heavenly regions

[168] *Manu*, VI.
[169] *Ibid.*, VI. 5-8.
[172] *Ibid.*, VI. 23.
[174] *Ibid.*, VI. 25.
[176] *Ibid.*, VI. 60.
[179] *Ibid.*, XII. 104: *vidyāya'mṛtam aśnute*.
[178] *Ibid.*, VI. 74, 82.
[181] *Ibid.*, XII. 82 ff.

[170] *Ibid.*, VI. 1-4.
[171] *Ibid*, VI. 47-8.
[173] *Ibid*. VI. 33.
[175] *Ibid.*, VI. 31, 45
[177] *Ibid.*, VI. 61-73.

[180] *Ibid.*, XII. 123
[182] *Ibid*, XII. 85.



and to the status of divine beings; but it is the doing of things with knowledge (*jñāna-pūrva*) and without desire or attachment (*niṣkāma*) that helps one to be liberated.[183] *Svārājya* or revelling in the bliss of Self is gained by one who adores the Ātman, seeing in everything around the same Self that is within himself.[184] While acts and austerities (*tapas*) can purify a person by destroying his sin, it is knowledge (*vidyā*) that can give him immortality (*amṛtam*).[185] The one unfailing way to ensure that one's mind never turns to *adharma* is to see the Ātman in everything,[186] for the Ātman is verily everything.[187] The Ātman is that which controls one from within, being subtler than the subtlest; it is the Ātman which some adore as the gods having different names, as teachers or as one's own life-breath, and others as the eternal Absolute Being.

KARMA-YOGA, RĀJA-YOGA

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, it is especially the philosophy of Karma-yoga taught in Chapter III that the Lord associates with Manu. In his commentary here,[188] Śaṅkara explains that it is to enable the Kṣatriyas to rule the earth and to provide them with a philosophical basis for, and special outlook on, their activity that the Lord taught this *yoga* to Vivasvat, from whom Manu learnt and passed it on to the kings. From this point of view, it is legitimate to take the characterization of the teaching as *rāja-vidyā* and *rāja-guhya* (kingly secret)[189] as having a special significance to the *rājarṣis* or saintly kings for whom this wisdom was pre-eminently intended, though, as applicable to others also engaged in activity, this came to be esteemed as the king of *vidyās* or philosophies and the most precious of esoteric wisdom. That the name *rāja-vidyā* might be taken in a straight manner as meaning the philosophy of the Kṣatriyas, is supported by the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, which explains,[190] quoting the very words of the *Gītā*, why this philosophy is called the mystic lore of the kings. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* says that as humanity went about gathering things for its life and began to indulge in mutual fight, it became necessary to have rulers over them, and they could not discharge their duty without punishing people and themselves entering into wars; but wars demoralized them, and to remove their depression and provide them with the right evaluation (*samyag-dṛṣṭi*), the sages taught them this philosophy. As it was first taught to the kings, this philosophy, which later spread to others, came to be called *rāja-vidyā*.[191]

[183] *Ibid.*, XII. 89, 90.
[184] *Ibid.*, XII. 91.
[185] *Ibid.*, XII. 104.
[186] *Ibid.*, XII. 118.
[187] *Ibid.*, XII. 119.
[188] *Ibid.*, IV. 1.
[189] *B. G.*, IX. 2.
[190] *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, II. 11. 4-8.
[191] *Ibid.*, II. 11. 14-18. See also my paper 'The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*', *JOR*, Madras, XIII., pp. 74-5.

It is this special doctrine of Karma-yoga which is associated with Manu. It would be interesting and fruitful to see how its chief features as set forth in the *Gītā* are stressed by Manu in his Dharma-śāstra.[192] This doctrine of non-attachment called Anāsakti-yoga or Asparśa-yoga strikes the balance between *karma* and *sannyāsa* and between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*; it takes away the sting or the binding taint from *karma* by the surrender of its fruit or by its dedication to the Supreme and by the disinterested discharge of it as one's ordained duty. Along with the sterilization of *karma* by *phala-tyāga*, the *karma-yogin* is also to develop equanimity in respect of the outcome of his endeavours or their attendant circumstances, whether he is faced with success or failure, gain or loss, pleasure or misery, honour or humiliation. It requires no demonstration to show that these are the leading ideas which run all through the *Gītā*. If we turn to the *Manu Smṛti*, we find Manu speaking of this doctrine in more than one important context. At the very outset, when he sets forth the *dharmas* of the different *varṇas*, Manu includes among those of the Kṣatriyas non-attachment to sense-pleasures, *viṣayeṣu aprasaktiḥ*.[193] Manu says, like the *Gītā*, that one should not feel depressed or elated, whatever the sense-experiences be (*na hṛṣyati glāyati*).[194] The freedom from *mātrā-sparśas* (sense contacts) and *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites) is insisted on: one should not be depressed by loss nor exhilarated by gain, and should be out of the contamination of *mātrā-saṅga*.[195] *Indriya-saṅga* (sense-attachment), *saṅga-tyāga* (renunciation of attachment), and freedom from all *dvandvas* find mention.[196] Manu states expressly that not only is the path of abandoning *karmas* called *nivṛtta* (detachment); but that the disinterested performance of *karma*, by a person of *jñāna* is also as much *nivṛtta*[197] (cf. *niṣkāmaṁ jñāna-pūrvaṁ tu nivṛttaṁ upadiśyate*).

Keith says in his observations on the *Manu Smṛti*[198] that in its philosophical parts, its tone often rises to a grave dignity, reminiscent of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This similarity with the *Gītā* is not merely in tone, but in the mode of thought and expression also, and in addition to what has already been shown above, many more parallels between the *Manu Saṁhitā* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* can be pointed out.

The extension of the above-mentioned *rāja-vidyā* of Karma-yoga to all

[192] There is, of course, a difference that in the *Manu Smṛti* it is Svāyambhuva Manu, and in the *Gītā*, it is Vaivasvata Manu; but the distinction being non historical, it does not affect our position really.

[193] *Manu*, I. 89.

[194] *Ibid.*, II. 98.

[195] Manu used *mātrā-saṅga* here in the same sense as the *Gītā* uses *mātrā sparśa* in II. 14. It is not known how Kullūka takes it differently and in a round about way.

[196] *Manu*, VI. 75; VI. 81.

[197] *Ibid.*, XII. 89.

[198] *HSL*, p. 445

those engaged in activity was referred to earlier. In *Manu*, too, we find its application to the *gṛhastha* (householder), chiefly the Brāhmaṇa. After describing the *vānaprastha* and the *sannyāsin*, Manu describes the *gṛhastha*, who could remain in his house and get released by cultivating the requisite virtues and by gradually renouncing desire after desire, including the rites ordained for the householder by the Vedas.[199] Manu praises the *gṛhasthāśrama* here and shows how a *gṛhastha* could become a *Veda-sannyāsika* (one who gives up Veda-ordained rituals), and practise Karma-yoga.[200] Earlier too, when setting forth the *dharmas* of the householder,[201] Manu speaks of these *gṛhasthas* who observe the *jñāna-yajña*, which the commentators have explained as referring to the *gṛhastha* who is a *Veda-sannyāsika*. Cultivating the ten *dharmas* (the *ātma-guṇas*, as they are also referred to)[202] common to all the four stages of life, and along with them the knowledge taught in the Vedānta, the *gṛhastha* should renounce all acts and live in retirement on the support of his son.[203] Thus by ridding himself of all desire (*aspṛhā*), and intent solely on the seeking of the Self, he attains the supreme stage.[204]

Thus even while enjoining the different *dharmas* of activity (*pravṛtti*) for a *gṛhastha*, Manu does not fail to give them the silver lining of spiritual ideology and the final goal of emancipation. While observing his ordained duties, the householder is to cultivate slowly virtues of resignation. There are certain things which he is permitted as his *dharma*; for example, a Brāhmaṇa is permitted to live by receiving gifts (*pratigraha*). Like *pratigraha*, there are a number of other things the doing of which will not entail any drawback on him, but abstaining from which brings him greater fruit. As part of the Karma-yoga in which one finds *nivṛtti* in *pravṛtti*, and as a golden path that makes the life of duty a great opportunity for disciplining and gradually sublimating oneself, Manu teaches this doctrine of slow transcending of desires by abstaining from such acts as are linked to desire and are likely to lead to the corruption of the spirit and thus be an impediment to the realization of the spiritual goal.[205]

[199] *Manu*, VI. 86-96. [200] *Ibid.*, VI. 86-90.
[201] *Ibid.*, IV. 24.
[202] In these ten, we find two qualities, *dhi* and *vidyā*, and to distinguish the two, Medhātithi in his *bhāṣya* explains the latter as knowledge of the Self (*ātma-jñāna*).
[203] See also *Manu*, IV. 257. [204] *Ibid.*, IV. 93-96.
[205] See also M. Hiriyanna, 'A Neglected Ideal of Life: *Nivṛttis tu mahāphalā*', *Indian Philosophical Congress Silver Jubilee Volume* (Calcutta, 1950), pp. 222-7. That this sublime doctrine is accepted and advocated by all schools of Indian thought is borne out by the observations of the Teṅkalai Śrīvaiṣṇava philosopher Lokācārya in his *Śrī-vacana-bhūṣaṇa*: '*vihita-viṣaya-nivṛtti tan-n erram*' (abstinence from even the enjoined or permitted enjoyment makes for one's elevation), and again, '*vihita-bhogaṁ niṣiddha-bhogaṁ pole loka-viruddhaṁ anru, naraka-hetuvuṁ anru . . . . prāpya-pratibandhakamayāle tyājyam*', which states the same thing in terms very close to Manu and with arguments.

ĀTMA-JÑĀNA THE GREATEST DHARMA

At the conclusion of his work, taking an over-all view of what had been dealt with at length under different heads in the course of the work, Manu sums up that, of all the acts, those conducive to the everlasting welfare (*niḥśreyasa*) or spiritual salvation are the greatest; for, of all kinds of activities, the knowledge of the Soul (*ātma-jñāna*) is the highest, and as that alone brings immortality, over and above all kinds of knowledge and learning, it stands supreme.[206] Thus the *dharma* expounded in the Dharma-śāstra of Manu comprehends all the aspirations of man, leading up to the highest, namely, the everlasting beatitude for the realization of which all the other aspirations and pursuits are adjusted and synthesized. Manu's work presents a whole picture of life here as harmonized with the hereafter. Minute and thorough, and going into details, it at the same time does not miss the over-all picture of the complete integrated life of a soul progressing through its many incarnations and opportunities for working out its destiny, to its ultimate goal of perfection and Self-realization.

Keith, who is impatient with Nietzsche for ranking Manu above the Bible, yet says that the *Manu Smṛti* 'is not merely important as a law-book', but 'it ranks as the expression of a philosophy of life', and 'in *Manu* we have the soul of a great section of a people'.[207] Says Bṛhaspati in his *Smṛti*, 'Different Śāstras strut about only so long as Manu, the teacher of *dharma*, *artha*, and *mokṣa*, does not appear on the scene.'[208]

[206] *Manu*, XII. 85.
[207] *HSL*, pp. 443-4.
[208] *HOS*, p. 233.

22

THE NIBANDHAS

ABOUT A.D. 700, when the great Kumārila Bhaṭṭa is supposed to have been living, and Muslim armies were preparing to knock at the western gate of India, the earlier period of the Dharma-śāstra literature may roughly be taken as closed. The number of Vedic Dharma-Sūtras and traditional Smṛti-saṁhitās, all ascribed to infallible sages, had then swelled together to well over a hundred, forming along with the relevant portions of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas almost a bewildering mass of original texts, which had gradually become authoritative in every part of India. They contain dicta covering all topics of civil, criminal, social, and religious laws and customs, sometimes full of apparent contradictions. The supreme task before the Aryan society now was to turn out regular codes of law from a synthetic study of these dicta. The scholastic system of the Mīmāṁsā with its thousand rules of interpretation, highly developed by the classical works of Śabara Svāmin, Kumārila, and Prabhākara, mainly formed the logic of this literature, and the best intellects of the country were thereby attracted to take up the above task with avidity. For more than a thousand years, they engaged themselves in writing glosses on the important texts, comprehensive digests, manuals on special topics of law, and various other books, all of which pass by the name of Nibandha. But scholars differed honestly in their interpretations and it gave rise, with local popularity and sanction, to many different schools and sub-schools of law with a healthy rivalry among them, all of which happened from the very start of the Nibandha literature. Every book which was law in particular areas, almost as binding as the modern High Court rulings, derived its authority mainly from the fact that the author was looked upon as an *āpta* (an ideal person) who had attained the highest moral and intellectual standard, and as the ultimate sanction of the Vedas must be stamped on every law-book, he must be a man of religion too in the best sense of the term. A very large number of such books were written in every part of India in successive ages, and it is impossible at present to give an accurate and adequate account of this vast literature, most of which is now lost, and of the small number so far discovered and acquired only a few have been printed, the rest lying in private and public libraries of manuscripts practically beyond the reach of scholars. The following brief survey can only seek to focus somewhat dimly on the history, chronology, jurisdiction, and varying authority of the Nibandhas.

THE COMMENTARIES

Some of the ancient texts, like those of *Manu* and *Yājñavalkya*, which had become all-India classics in matters of *dharma*, were formally analysed in a large number of so-called commentaries, varying from the expansive *bhāṣya* to the concise *vṛtti*, by eminent scholars of all ages and climes. The following among them belonged to the top rank in point of time and well-merited authority.

Asahāya, mentioned already by Viśvarūpa, Medhātithi, and various other authorities, may probably be regarded as the first *bhāṣyakāra* in the literature. Except for a fragment of a revised version of his *Nārada-bhāṣya*, where the reviser Kalyāṇa Bhaṭṭa took ample liberties with the lost original, all of his works—the *bhāṣyas* on *Gautama*, *Manu*, and *Nārada*—are now lost. He flourished before A.D. 750. A few of his rulings on succession have been preserved in later works, notably the *Sarasvatī-vilāsa*, and these may be looked upon as marking the first attempt to codify Indian law.[1]

Viśvarūpa's commentary (*vivaraṇa*) named *Bāla-krīḍā* on *Yājñavalkya*, published in its entirety from Trivandrum in 1922-24, reveals a veritable mine from which scholars may dig out historical facts. His identity with the Śaṅkarite Sureśvara on the one hand and the poet Bhavabhūti on the other, as stated by later authors, if accepted, would place him about A.D. 750 rather than A.D. 800-25, as Kane[2] supposed. A past master in the Mīmāṁsā, though with a philosophic leaning towards Śaṅkara, he adorned his annotations on many of the sections with ample, elaborate, and advanced dissertations in a style reminding us of Kumārila, some of which, as the one on *śrāddha* (memorial rites) significantly called the *Śrāddha-kalpa*,[3] may well pass for separate books. The famous theory of ownership preceding partition, established in the *Mitākṣarā*, really originated with Viśvarūpa,[4] many of whose liberal views, however, are in disagreement with this. His piquant reference to the monarch and in the same breath to schools of law (*sampradāya*) and their interpreters[5] clearly suggests where the operative part of the Nibandhas took final shape. It appears that a different Viśvarūpa wrote a large digest, cited by many ancient writers like Jīmūtavāhana, about A.D. 1050, the numerous quotations of this later Viśvarūpa being mostly untraceable in the *Bāla-krīḍā*.[6]

[1] P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, I. pp. 247-51, Sec. 58. This monumental book has been consulted at every step.
[2] *History of Dharmaśāstra*, I., p. 253.
[3] *Bāla-krīḍā*, I, p. 173.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 244-5.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 201.
[6] *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXII, p. 140.

Medhātithi's extensive commentary (*bhāṣya*) on Manu, printed on several occasoins under the editorship of V. N. Mandlik, J. R. Gharpure, Ganganath Jha, and others, is another mine of information on all topics of *dharma*. An erudite scholar of the Mīmāṁsā, he referred to Kumārila by name and probably quoted Śaṅkara. He flourished, therefore, in the ninth century A.D. and has been supposed to be a Kashmirian. He also wrote what must have been the first regular digest of Indian law named *Smṛti-viveka*, cited by himself and later authors, which remains yet to be discovered.

Vijñāneśvara's commentary (*vivṛti*) named *Mitākṣarā* on Yājñavalkya was composed about A.D. 1120, when the Cālukya king Vikramāditya VI of Kalyāṇa (A.D. 1076-1126) was at the height of his power.[7] Profound scholarship in the Mīmāṁsā, rare judgment in the synthesis of varied legal dicta, the asceticism of a Paramahaṁsa, and the patronage of one of the greatest monarchs of the age—all combined to achieve for Vijñāneśvara the unique glory of completely superseding all previous authors and becoming the supreme authority in legal matters in the whole of India (except Bengal). Propinquity as the guiding principle in inheritance and the principle of ownership with birth are among the peculiar views strictly adhered to in the *Mitākṣarā*, which has several sub-commentaries to its credit, including those of Viśveśvara (A.D. 1360-90) and Bālam Bhaṭṭa (*c.* A.D. 1770).

Kullūka Bhaṭṭa's handy commentary (*vṛtti*) on Manu, professedly based on a critical absorption of the previous works of Medhātithi and Govindarāja, achieved a remarkable celebrity from the very time it was written and, in spite of its lack of originality, deserves in a manner the memorable eulogy passed on it by Sir William Jones that 'It is the shortest yet the most luminous, the least ostentatious yet the most learned, the deepest yet the most agreeable, commentary ever composed on any author, ancient or modern.' It was composed about A.D. 1300 and was already cited by Caṇḍeśvara in the *Rājanīti-ratnākara*. Kullūka belonged to a well-known Vārendra Brāhmaṇa family of Bengal, and his family history corroborates the above date. He wrote at Kāśī, where he must have found easy means for speedy circulation of his single work, which earned for him a glorious place among classical authors. It should be mentioned here that the *Śrāddha-sāgara*, ascribed to him, turns out on a careful scrutiny to be an amazing forgery.

We conclude this sketch with a bare mention of the ancient commentaries of Bhartṛyajña (before A.D. 800) and Bhāruci (early in the ninth

[7] K. V. R. Aiyangar, *Kṛtya-kalpataru*, *Dāna-kāṇḍa*, Introduction, I., 38 and 44. We have preferred this view to that of Kane.

century A.D.) both now lost, and those of Govindarāja on *Manu*, and *Aparārka* (i.e. the Śilāhāra king Aparāditya I, who reigned between A.D. 1110-1130), Śūlapāṇi, and Mitramiśra on Yājñavalkya, all of whom were reputed authorities on Indian law.

THE NIBANDHAS PROPER—BENGAL SCHOOL

In the earlier period, which might be termed the golden epoch of commentaries, there is a distinct paucity of independent works on *dharma*, no such book preceding the eleventh century A.D. having survived, not even the *Smṛti-viveka* of Medhātithi. This curious fact is explained, I believe, by the prevailing sense of rare reverence for the hallowed works of the sages. The evolution of regular digests, as distinguished from commentaries, is better illustrated by the accounts of numerous schools of law that flourished in various parts of India from the earliest times. The account of the so-called Bengal school, that preserved its separate existence intact for almost a millennium, is given here first of all for its well-documented history, which falls into three well-marked periods pre-Muslim, pre-Raghunandana (A.D. 1200-1550) corresponding to the Pathan period of Indian history, and post-Raghunandana. In the first period, the earliest author whose works have partly survived is Govindarāja, who belonged to Bengal.[8] He wrote two digests, the extensive *Smṛti-mañjarī* and, as its very name denotes, a smaller compendium *Ṛju-puñjikā*, both cited by himself in his later work *Manu-vṛtti*.[9] The latter is lost, and only two large fragments of the former are known—the London manuscript on *prāyaścitta* and the Calcutta manuscript on *śrāddha* copied in the Newari year 265, i.e. A.D. 1144. The contents of the book, given at the end of the London copy, prove that it dealt with all the principal topics of *dharma*, including, on the evidence of a citation by Jīmūtavāhana, administration (*vyavahāra*). He flourished about A.D. 1050 and was evidently eclipsed by the success of Bhavadeva and Jīmūtavāhana.

Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, surnamed 'Bāla-valabhī-bhujaṅga', was a native of Uttara Rāḍha in West Bengal and settled at Vikramapura in East Bengal as a minister of King Harivarmadeva (A.D. 1073-1119) and his son. His Mīmāṁsā work *Tautātita-mata-tilaka*[10] was one of the classics of the Bhāṭṭa school and made him famous outside Bengal. In Bengal he is immortalized by the *Daśakarma-paddhati* (also called *Karmānuṣṭhāna-paddhati*, *Daśakarma-dīpikā*, etc.), which still continues to be the most authoritative guide-book of the tenfold rites of the Sāma-Vedins. His *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa*,[11] for its

[8] *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XXII., pp. 141-2.
[9] On *Manu*, III. 247 8.
[10] Published in the Sarasvati Bhavana Series.
[11] Rajshahi Edition, 1927.

close reasoning and advanced treatment, could not be fully superseded even by the standard works of Śūlapāṇi and Raghunandana on the same topic. So also was the short manual of his on marriage named *Sambandha-viveka*.[12] The fourth extant work of this great writer is the *Śava-sūtakāśauca-prakaraṇa*, which has been brought to light very recently, and of which we had no information before. The rest of Bhavadeva's works, notably the *Vyavahāra-tilaka* and the *Nirṇayāmṛta*, often cited by later authorities, are now lost. His outstanding political and scholastic career is recorded in a unique contemporary panegyric (*kula-praśasti*), originally discovered in Dacca and now placed, through a mistake, in a temple of Bhuvanesvara in Orissa. Most of his books were composed before A.D. 1100.

Jīmūtavāhana, belonging to the Pāribhadra family of Rāḍhīya Brāhmaṇas, wrote a comprehensive digest named *Dharma-ratna*, of which only three parts are known and have been put in print. The *Dāyabhāga* is the paramount authority in Bengal in matters of succession and inheritance, the fountain source of the vast literature that grew up in Bengal upon that vital topic. Bharat Chandra Shiromani's edition of the book (A.D. 1863-66) published seven commentaries, including those of Raghunandana and his teacher Śrīnātha Ācārya-cūḍāmaṇi. The *Kāla-viveka* is an exhaustive analysis of the auspicious moments for the performance of sacred ceremonies, another vital topic of Aryan society, and gives us a refreshing glimpse of a vast ancient literature that grew up thereon in Bengal and was completely supplanted by it. There is clear evidence in the book itself that it was written soon after March, A.D. 1093, the last of a number of exact dates examined in it. The *Vyavahāra-mātṛkā* is the earliest extant treatise on judicial procedure and one of the best ever written on that subject, exhibiting the boldness, precision, and dialectic powers of the author, quite rare in that age. Ownership after partition, spiritual benefit as the guiding principle of inheritance, and the principle of *factum valet* are some of the bold and peculiar doctrines of the great author, and the Bengal school with which he is identified has sometimes been called 'reformed' as a consequence of it.

Several other authoritative works of this period have survived in Bengal, and as they are still consulted in the seminaries, they have all been published. The much-commented *Śuddhi-dīpikā* by Śrīnivāsa of the Mahintāpanīya family of Rāḍhīya Brāhmaṇas is still a standard work on the time-element of ceremonies and astrology. His lost work *Gaṇita-cūḍāmaṇi* was composed exactly in Śaka 1081 (A.D. 1159-60), evidently under King Ballāla Sena, who respectfully engaged him to compose for him the *Adbhuta-*

[12] Published in the *New Indian Antiquary*, VI.

sāgara, the great work on omens, which was commenced in Śaka 1090 (A.D. 1168-69). The *Dāna-sāgara* (finished in Śaka 1091) of the same king, one of the best works on gifts, was, however, written by the king's *guru* Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa of the Campāhiṭṭa family of Vārendra Brāhmaṇas, who also wrote two other standard books, the *Hāra-latā* on impurities and the *Pitṛ-dayitā* on the common rites of the Sāma-Vedins. Lastly, the *Brāhmaṇa-sarvasva* of Halāyudha, a *dharmādhyakṣa* (an officer in charge of religious affairs) under King Lakṣmaṇa Sena, is still a familiar book on the exegesis of the Vedic texts commonly used in the ceremonies.

In the next period of Muslim invasion and occupation there was a temporary disruption and decay almost everywhere in every sphere. Bengal seems to have withstood the onslaught well enough, as indicated by the large output of Smṛti works during the period.[13] Most of these are now lost or gone beyond our reach—the works of Nīlāmbarācārya, Bhīmopādhyāya of the Kāñjivilva family, Rāja-paṇḍita Kuberopādhyāya of the same family (who composed a commentary on the *Bhāsvatī* in Śaka 1229, i.e. A.D. 1307-8),[14] Balabhadra's *Aśauca-sāra*, and Nārāyaṇopādhyāya's masterpiece *Samaya-prakāśa*, to name only a few. The last-named author also wrote the *Pariśiṣṭa-prakāśa*[15] and was long regarded as the leading Smārta of Bengal during this period, only yielding his place to his critic and successor, Śūlapāṇi Mahāmahopādhyāya,[16] the founder of what is called 'Navya-Smṛti' in Bengal. Born in the Sāhuḍiyāla family of Rāḍhīya Brāhmaṇas, Śūlapāṇi wrote many books some time between A.D. 1415 and 1465, of which twenty have been counted so far. Two of his most intricate works, the *Śrāddha-viveka* and the *Prāyaścitta-viveka*, are still assiduously studied in the seminaries of Bengal. The former, his masterpiece, being full of abstruse Mīmāṁsā technicalities, has invited, right from the end of the fifteenth century A.D., some of the best scholars of Bengal to write learned commentaries on it, and we see those of Śrīnātha Ācāryacūḍāmaṇi (who knew older glosses), Haridāsa Tarkācārya (composed soon after A.D. 1503), Govindānanda Kavikaṅkaṇācārya, Haridāsa's son Acyuta Cakravartin, Maheśvara Nyāyālaṅkāra, and Śrīkṛṣṇa Tarkālaṅkāra in the chronological order. Most of the above-mentioned scholars were prolific writers of various other treatises of great authority; and it was Śrīnātha who introduced,

[13] *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XVII, pp. 459-65.

[14] *Indian Culture*, XI, pp. 33-6.

[15] Published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* Series.

[16] Haridāsa Tarkācārya bore testimony to the unrivalled eminence of the two great scholars in a panegyric verse in the *Śrāddha-viveka-pradīpa* (fol. 60b of manuscript No. 1591 of the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, Calcutta), beginning as follows (cf. *Sāhitya-Pariṣat-Patrikā*, XLVII, p. 51):—

Gauḍa-smārta samūha-mauli-muktālaṅkāra-māṇikyayoḥ,
Śrī-Nārāyaṇa Śūlapaṇi-viduṣo(r) . . .

perhaps for the first time in Bengal, Navya-Nyāya terminology and methods in his exegesis. It appears that the works of Śrīnātha, twenty in number as so far counted, of Haridāsa, four in number, and of Govindānanda, about a dozen in number, lay constantly before Raghunandana, who was profoundly inspired by them. About A.D. 1440 Bṛhaspati Miśra, better known by one of his titles Rāya-mukuṭa, wrote an authoritative and comprehensive digest *Smṛti-ratnahāra*, a large unique fragment of which has been preserved in the library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Before him Soma Miśra wrote an interesting *Śūdra-paddhati*, ascribed to his patron Apipāla, a local chief of Varendra living about A.D. 1350-1400. Both of them were respectfully cited by Raghunandana and other premier scholars.[17]

Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya employed his great intellectual powers in carefully scrutinizing and laying under contribution the vast literature on *dharma* that had accumulated before him, and practically superseded all the previous authorities except Jīmūtavāhana and Śūlapāṇi by his grand performance, the *Smṛti-tattva* in 28 parts, with the addition of several practical guides and about a dozen other tracts on odd topics. The period of his activity is fixed as A.D. 1550-75, the latest authority cited by him (in the unpublished *Rāsa-yātrā-tattva*) being Govindānanda, whose *Śuddhi-kaumudī* recorded the *mala-māsa* (intercalary month) Śrāvaṇa in Śaka 1457 (July of A.D. 1535). The secret of his unique success lies in the fact that he lived, studied, taught, and composed his works at Navadvīpa, which had already become the greatest centre of Sanskrit culture in eastern India, attracting scholars from the farthest corners of the country. What should properly be called the Nadīa school of Navya-Smṛti (new law), which has started with Śūlapāṇi about a century before, was firmly established by Raghunandana the 'Jagad-guru', who carried the world before him. Studies of the seven major works of his, viz. the *Tattvas* on *tithi*, *udvāha*, *prāyaścitta*, *śuddhi*, *śrāddha*, *mala-māsa*, and *ekādaśī*, have been current throughout Bengal for over three centuries, and being gradually developed through the famous commentaries of Kāśīrāma Vācaspati (*c.* A.D. 1725-50) and Rādhāmohana Vidyāvācaspati (better known as Gosvāmin Bhaṭṭācārya, *c.* A.D. 1800), and also through the advanced notes by various scholars, assumed enormous proportions in academics. Raghunandana's texts, however, did never constitute the last word on topics of *dharma* ; on the other hand, they were interpreted and revised by a galaxy of renowned scholars, including Gopāla Nyāyapañcānana (A.D. 1613) and Raghunātha Sārvabhauma (A.D. 1661). Most of the works of these post-Raghunandana Smārtas have survived and contain many interesting views. For instance, the *Dāya-rahasya*

[17] Cf. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XVII, pp. 456-71 for date and works of Rāyamukuṭa, and *SPP*, LIV, pp 5-7 for Apipāla.

of Rāmanātha Vidyāvācaspati (A.D. 1622-57), which according to Colebrooke 'obtained a considerable degree of authority in some of the districts of Bengal',[18] boldly argued for the inheritance of the daughter-in-law and other women. Most of them owed allegiance to Navadvīpa, but belonged to separate *samājas* or socio-religious communities, into which Bengal had been divided from ancient times. Final decisions in matters of *dharma* rested with such leading scholars of each locality, who fully enjoyed public confidence and support.[19] A healthy rivalry kept these local sub-schools in a flourishing condition until the British times, when they were ruthlessly uprooted and displaced by the different courts of law under foreign domination and imported ideals. The vanishing line of uprooted scholars of the old type, nevertheless, continued to produce laudable works, such as those of Chandrakanta Tarkalankara (A.D. 1836-1910) and Krishnanatha Nyayapanchanana (A.D. 1833-1911).

MITHILA SCHOOL

It is unfortunate that no Nibandha of the pre-Muslim period has yet been traced in the land of Yājñavalkya. This, however, was fully compensated for in the next period (A.D. 1200-1550) when Mithilā produced by far the largest number of works on *dharma* in the whole of India, thanks to the patronage of the Karṇāṭa and the Brāhmaṇa kings. Śrīdattopādhyāya, who was preceded by Graheśvara Miśra, Gaṇeśvara Miśra and several others, and who is not to be confused with a later Śrīdatta Miśra, wrote as many as seven treatises of the greatest authority in Mithilā on the daily rites, times of ceremonies, religious vows, funerals, and purifications. As he is cited by Caṇḍeśvara, he must have lived about A.D. 1300 or a little earlier. His frequent references to the Gauḍas should be noted. Harināthopādhyāya's *Smṛti-sāra* in two parts on *ācāra* (daily rites) and *vivāda* (legal disputes) is a complete digest of about the same age and equally authoritative. The eight 'oceans' (*ratnākara*),[20] with a few supplements, of the minister Caṇḍeśvara quickly made their mark in all the eastern regions for their extensive, thorough, up-to-date, and lucid treatment, and amply fulfilled the author's ambition of superseding the five previous classics, viz *Prakāśa, Pārijāta, Kāmadhenu, Halāyudha,* and *Kalpataru.* As he was alive still about A.D. 1370, when he wrote the *Rājanīti-ratnākara* under

[18] Colebrooke (Ed.), *Dāyabhāga*, preface, p. ix.

[19] H. P. Sastri, *Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts* (old series), XI (1895), p. 2. This is the only place where we find a reference to the important *samājas* of Bengal, whose existence from ancient times has been completely forgotten and ignored by recent scholars.

[20] The titles of these works are: *Kṛtya-ratnākara* ; *Dāna-ratnākara* ; *Vyavahāra-ratnākara* ; *Śuddhi-ratnākara* ; *Pūjā-ratnākara* ; *Vivāda-ratnākara* ; *Gṛhastha-ratnākara* ; and *Rāja-nīti-ratnākara.*

King Bhaveśa, he must have begun his literary works about A.D. 1330. About the same time the great logician Varddhamānopādhyāya, son of Gaṅgeśa, wrote the *Smṛti-paribhāṣā* and the *Śrāddha-pradīpa*, both respectfully cited by all later authors of Mithilā and Bengal. He should not be confused with his namesake, whom Raghunandana carefully distinguished by the term *navya* (new).

In the fifteenth century A.D., Mithilā produced quite a galaxy of great Smṛti writers too numerous to be mentioned adequately. The towering figure among them all was Vācaspati Miśra, who shared with Gaṅgeśa the supreme title 'Parama-guru' (the Greatest Teacher), only twice used in the vast Pañjī literature of Mithilā. He wrote ten works on the Nyāya philosophy and at least thirty-one works on Smṛti, and his period of activity lay between A.D. 1425 and 1475.[21] Many of his works are still current in Mithilā and parts of Bengal and Assam. His *Vivāda-cintāmaṇi* on civil law is one of the best works on the subject. His *Dvaita-nirṇaya* on doubtful points of law is the most learned of all his Smṛti works, and several eminent scholars wrote commentaries on it. A critical edition of his *Vyavahāra-cintāmaṇi*, a digest on legal procedure, has recently been published.[22] The great success and eminence of Vācaspati Miśra are proved by the fact that he is commonly identified with the Mithilā school. In spite of him, however, several works of his elderly contemporary, Rudradhara, have survived, while those of his close contemporary and kinsman Śaṅkara Miśra, who made his mark as one of the foremost scholars of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, are all but lost. The famous poet Vidyāpati, who slightly preceded Vācaspati, wrote a few Smṛti works, of which the *Gaṅgā-vākyāvalī* (ascribed to Queen Viśvasadevī), the *Dāna-vākyāvalī* (ascribed to Queen Dhīramati), and the *Durgā-bhakti-taraṅgiṇī* (ascribed to Narasiṁhadeva of Mithilā . . .) are the best known. The *Vivāda-candra* of Misaru Miśra[23] and the *Daṇḍa-viveka* of Vācaspati's pupil Varddhamāna Miśra[24] are two authoritative works on civil and criminal law, both written in the third quarter of the century. A few more works were also written in the subsequent centuries, including the *Smṛti-kaumudī* of Devanātha (partly published at Darbhanga), but none of them circulated beyond Mithilā, where the glaring activities at Banaras and Navadvīpa seem to have had a deterrent effect. The Mithilā school, it should be noted, differs from the so-called Banaras school only on minor points.

[21] *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute*, IV., p. 311.
[22] Ed. by Ludo Rocher, Gent, 1956.
[23] *Vivāda-candra*, Ed. Benares, 1931.
[24] *Daṇḍa-viveka*, Ed. Baroda, 1931.

KĀMARŪPA SCHOOL

Kāmarūpa, like many other places of India, is guided in matters of law by its own literature on the subject existing from ancient times, which forms, therefore, a separate school in that sense. The earliest work that has survived is the *Gaṅgā-jala* by Dāmodara Mahāmiśra,[25] composed in Śaka 1356 (A.D. 1435) under an unidentified king, Bhūmijaya. It is still an authority in parts of Assam and North Bengal and is a concise work, mostly metrical, complete in five parts—*prāyaścitta* (expiation), *vivāha* (marriage), *tithi* (luni-solar days), *āśauca* (pollution), and *śrāddha* (memorial rites). By far the greatest authority in Kāmarūpa is Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa, surnamed 'Jagadguru Bhaṭṭācārya', who had composed as many as twenty-two *kaumudīs* (so far counted). Many of them have been published, and some have recorded their dates of composition: the *Dāya-kaumudī* was written in Śaka 1526, the *Śuddhi-kaumudī* in Śaka 1534, the *Vyavahāra-kaumudī* in Śaka 1525 (copy at Baroda), and the *Saṅkrānti-kaumudī* in Śaka 1540. The period of his activity was, therefore, A.D. 1600-25. A profound scholar of both the Mīmāṁsā and the Nyāya, he consulted important works of both Mithilā and Bengal, which influenced his views to a very great extent. His works are extremely valuable, therefore, for a comparative study of the two rival schools. In width of learning, thoroughness and precision of judgement he was in no way inferior to Raghunandana, whom he has criticized, though very rarely and without naming him. Besides *Vyavahāra* and *Vivāda*, both on civil law, he wrote a separate *Daṇḍa-kaumudī* on criminal law. He also wrote commentaries of the Tāntrika work *Śāradā-tilaka* and Vācaspati's *Dvaita-nirṇaya*. The next great writer in Kāmarūpa was Śambhunātha Siddhāntavāgīśa, also a 'Jagad-guru' (World-teacher), who composed under royal patronage a number of *bhāskaras*, one, *Akāla-bhāskara*, in Śaka 1639 and another in Śaka 1640, just a century after Pītāmbara. None of his works are available in print, nor the *Pūrṇa-candra* of Ripuñjaya Bhaṭṭācārya or the *Daśakarma-paddhati* of Pañcānana Kaṇḍalī, both regarded as authorities in the school.

BANARAS OR MID-INDIAN SCHOOL

Banaras, the nerve-centre of Indian culture, was the meeting ground of scholars from all parts of India, belonging to different schools and systems. The Banaras school of law, as the term is used in the modern courts, is consequently a great misnomer and really constitutes what should properly be called the 'Mid-Indian' (Madhya-deśa) school. After the death of the great Mālava ruler Bhojadeva the patronage of scholarship and religious

[25] *Gaṅgā-jala*, Ed. Gauripur, 1930, 1936.

institutions received a remarkable impetus from the sudden rise of the powerful Gāhaḍavāla kings of Kānyakubja. It was under Govindacandra, the greatest ruler of the dynasty, that his chief minister Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara composed the *Kṛtya-kalpataru* in fourteen parts. It was the most comprehensive and authoritative digest of *dharma* of the pre-Muslim period and quickly circulated throughout India. Scrupulous about the purity of his sources, he has almost put a final seal on the authenticity of original texts, which he selected with rare discrimination, adding very brief notes of his own. His eminence put to shade all the earlier codes, which are now totally lost—the *Mahārṇava* (*-prakāśa*) of Bhojadeva, the *Pārijāta*, the *Kāmadhenu* of his friend Gopāla, the code of Halāyudha, and the *Ratnamālā*. The *Kalpataru* was composed about A.D. 1110 early in the reign of Govindacandra, and for over 500 years it was the main source of inspiration for all the subsequent Dharma-śāstra literature except in South India. Ballāla Sena of Bengal, Hemādri of western India, and Caṇḍeśvara of Mithilā, to name only the most distinguished authors, were immensely influenced by it. One reason for this unique position of the *Kalpataru* is the fact that Mid-India (Madhya-deśa) had continued from the times of Manu to be the most enlightened place in India. In Śaka 1480 (A.D. 1558), Kāśīnātha Vidyānivāsa Bhaṭṭācārya, one of the most distinguished Bengali scholars, settled at Banaras, composed among many books a comprehensive treatise named *Saccarita-mīmāṁsā*, where he cited the *Kalpataru* much oftener than any other work and regarded the customs of Mid-India as faultless.[26]

The historic defeat of Jayacandra, followed by the sacking of Banaras and its temples, caused a havoc in North India, and for over a century all cultural activities seem to have shifted to safer places specially in South India. Nevertheless, zealous Hindu chiefs came forward all around to protect the *dharma*, which was considered to be in peril, and many of them engaged competent scholars to compile new digests for the people of their own dominions. A systematic account of these laudable attempts is hard to compile, as only a few outstanding works have survived. The most famous compilation of the Pathan period is the *Madana-pārijāta*, written by Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭa for a comparatively petty 'Ṭāka' chief named Madanapāla, significantly called the *abhinava* (new) Bhoja, who ruled over a small kingdom to the north of Delhi. He lived in the last half of the fourteenth century A.D., the date of composition of his medical lexicon being exactly

[26] Manuscript at the Oriental Institute, Baroda (accession No. 12694); a photographic copy is preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. An account of this very important work was published in *Sāhitya-Pariṣat-Patrikā*, LVI., pp. 70-4. One passage runs (fol. 65b of the last part):—

'Ayam-ācāro-(a)vigīta-Madhya-deśācāratvāt sarva-deśīyair-anusartum-ucita iti.'

1431 Vikramābda (A.D. 1375). It is an extensive code, covering all topics of *dharma* (except *vyavahāra*) and became popular in all parts of India including Mithilā and Bengal. A sister work called *Mahārṇava* (on the subject of what is called *karma-vipāka*, i.e. evils of antenatal acts and their remedies) is ascribed to Māndhātā, a son of Madanapāla and another, the *Smṛti-kaumudī*, dealt with the duties of the Śūdras. The real author Viśveśvara was probably a Drāviḍa, and wrote a learned commentary on the *Mitākṣarā* named *Subodhinī* in his own name.

Madanasiṁha, a Mahārājādhirāja, who probably ruled near Delhi, wrote an extensive digest, complete in seven parts,[27] with the help of several scholars, one of whom, Viśvanātha Bhaṭṭa, was a resident of Banaras. This book named the *Madanaratna-pradīpa* or *Madanaratna*, though quite unknown in Mithilā and Bengal, was respectfully cited by all the distinguished scholars of Banaras—Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, Kamalākara, Nīlakaṇṭha, and Mitra Miśra. It was probably written about A.D. 1425. We close this account of the royal protectors of *dharma* with the mention of one more name, which is a household word in India. Rāṇī Durgāvatī of Garh-Maṇḍala, who was killed in the battlefield fighting bravely against Akbar's commander Asaf Khan in 973 A.H. (A.D. 1565-66), engaged Padmanābha Miśra, one of the greatest scholars of the age, to compose an extensive digest named, after her, as *Durgāvatī-prakāśa* in seven parts. Only the first part called *Samayāloka* was completed before her tragic end, when the project fell through.[28] The book was cited in Śaṅkara Bhaṭṭa's *Dvaita-nirṇaya*. As a happy result of Akbar's policy, his finance minister Ṭoḍaramalla compiled a large encyclopaedia on *dharma* named *Ṭoḍarānanda* between A.D. 1565 and 1589.[29] All the above works, however, gradually became obsolete during the great revival of learning at Banaras proper under the leadership of the Bhaṭṭa family of Viśvāmitra *gotra* (clan). It started with the rebuilder of the Viśvanātha temple, Jagad-guru Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, who was born in A.D. 1513. In the Dharma-śāstra, he was the author of three standard works, still consulted largely by scholars, viz. *Antyeṣṭi-paddhati*, *Tristhalī-setu* (on the three shrines), and *Prayoga-ratna* (on the purificatory rites). Two of his sons Rāmakṛṣṇa and Śaṅkara were also distinguished scholars, but they were eclipsed by the grand performances of their respective sons Kamalākara and Nīlakaṇṭha. Kamalākara, a voluminous writer of twenty two works on various subjects, composed the *Nirṇaya-sindhu* in

[27] One part of *Madanaratna-pradīpa* has been published from Bikaner, edited by P. V. Kane.

[28] An excellent copy of the *Samayāloka*, dated V.S. 1621 (Dec 5, A.D 1564), is preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. This copy was made in the lifetime of Rāṇī Durgāvatī, very soon after the composition of the book.

[29] Published in the Anup Oriental Series, Bikaner, edited by P. L. Vaidya.

A.D. 1612. This work is now recognized as a great authority in both the Banaras and Bombay schools of law and is a monument of industry and erudition. Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa Ārḍe composed a gloss on it named the *Ratnamālā*.[30] Nīlakaṇṭha, a less ambitious scholar, concentrated all his energy on a single work, the encyclopaedic *Bhagavanta-bhāskara*, complete in twelve *Mayūkhas* (rays), composed at the request of his patron Bhagavanta, who was a Bundella chief.[31] Some of these *Mayūkhas* are regarded as great authorities in Banaras and Bombay. Nanda Paṇḍita of the Dharmādhikārī family of Banaras was also a voluminous writer of at least thirteen works. His *Dattaka-mīmāṁsā* was regarded as the standard work on adoption in the whole of India, while his extensive commentary on the *Viṣṇu-Sūtra* called *Keśava-vaijayantī* is also a leading authority in Banaras. It was composed in A.D. 1623 at the request of a certain Brāhmaṇa chief named Keśava Nāyaka, who migrated to Banaras from South India. Vīrasiṁha of Orchha (A.D. 1605-27) and his protege Mitra Miśra are immortalized in the *Vīra-mitrodaya*, which was by far the bulkiest and the most comprehensive of all digests of those times. It has separate parts on *vyavahāra* (judicial procedure), *pūjā* (worship), and *mokṣa* (liberation), besides all the common topics of *dharma*. Mitra Miśra is regarded as an authority not only in North India but also in Drāviḍa. We close this section with the bare mention of Anantadeva's *Smṛti-kaustubha*, written under Bazbāhādur (A.D. 1638-78) of Ālmorā; two of its several parts, viz. on *saṁskāras* and *rāja-dharma*, are accepted as authorities.

SOUTH INDIAN SCHOOLS

References to 'Dākṣiṇātya-Nibandhas' are found in many books of North India. As the whole of South India, denoted by the word *dākṣiṇātya*, never formed a single unit, political or cultural, an artificial unity due to its geographical situation south of the Vindhyas is imposed by the term, much like the so-called Bombay and Madras schools of Hindu law, upon different cultural institutions, whose number must have varied almost with the number of monarchies in that region. Only a few scraps of the lost history of these separate schools of law are now available.

Utkala or Orissa was governed in matters of *dharma* by its own works for a long time. Of the several standard works still current here, the *Nityācāra-paddhati* by Vidyākara Vājapeyīn, composed about A.D. 1425-50, is the greatest authority, respectfully cited by Vidyānivāsa, Raghunandana,

[30] Published in the Chawkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras.

[31] The titles of these *Mayūkhas* are: *Saṁskāra*, *Ācāra*, *Kāla* (or *Samaya*), *Śrāddha*, *Nīti*, *Vyavahāra*, *Dāna*, *Utsarga*, *Pratiṣṭhā*, *Prāyaścitta*, *Śuddhi*, and *Śānti*. All of these have been published from Banaras, while some have been published from Bombay and other places.

and other authors of Bengal. The *Nityācāra-pradīpa* of Narasiṁha Vājapeyīn, the *Kāla-dīpa* and the *Śrāddha-dīpa* of Divyasiṁha Mahāpātra, the *Ācāra-sāra* and other works of *Gadādhara*, and the *Prāyaścitta-manohara* of Murāri Miśra are the ruling authorities in Orissa. The celebrated Rājā Pratāparudra (A.D. 1496-1539) was the author of two famous books, *Sarasvatī-vilāsa*,[32] and the *Pratāpa-mārtaṇḍa*. The extant portion of the former on *vyavahāra* is a mine of information, much of which is no longer available elsewhere. It is a recognized authority in the so-called Madras school of Hindu law. The title Vājapeyīn along with Agni-cit and Somayājin proves that Vedic sacrifices had not yet disappeared from Orissa.

For over two centuries (A.D. 1335-1565) the kingdom of Vijayanagara stood as the great bulwark of Indian culture against foreign aggression, and the name of Mādhavācārya, the ascetic minister of its earlier kings, shines forth as by far the greatest scholar of southern India in the mediaeval Age. Two of his works on Dharma-śāstra have been regarded as great classics throughout India, viz. extensive *bhāṣya* (commentary) on the *Parāśara Saṁhitā*, popularly called the *Parāśara-Mādhavīya*[33] and the *Kāla-nirṇaya*, called the *Kāla-Mādhava*. The latter was written soon after Śaka 1281 (A.D. 1359), the last of several exact dates recorded in the book, and within a decade or two it was commented upon by Rāmacandrācārya, the celebrated author of the grammar *Prakriyā-kaumudī*, in the *Kāla-nirṇaya-dīpikā* ; Rāmacandra's son Nṛsiṁha, again, wrote a sub-commentary (*vivaraṇa*) on the *Dīpikā* in the year Śaka 1331 (A.D. 1409). Mādhava was cited both by Śūlapāṇi and Raghunandana. He is a recognized authority in the so-called Madras school of Hindu law.

Next only to Mādhava, Hemādri was the brightest star in South India. He composed, among many works on different subjects, the *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi*, intended to be complete in five parts—*vrata* (vows), *dāna* (charity), *tīrtha* (pilgrimage), *mokṣa* (liberation), and *pariśeṣa* (the rest).[34] He was then the minister in charge of the state records of Mahādeva (A.D. 1261-1270), the Yādava ruler of Devagiri. The Yādavas seem to have come forward as the saviours of Indian culture when Muslim armies were attacking the northern provinces. An idea of the extent of the great book is gathered from the fact that the printed portion of roughly half of it covers about six thousand pages. Hemādri was a profound scholar of the Mīmāṁsā, and its maxims are employed by him at every step of his arguments. Parts of the book, especially those on *vrata* and *dāna*, soon became

[32] Published from Mysore, edited by R. Samasastry.

[33] Parāśara's *Dharma Saṁhitā* with the comm. of Sāyaṇa-Mādhavācārya, ed. by V. S. Islampurkar. BSS, 3 vols. Bombay, 1893-1919.

[34] Ed. by Bharatachandra Siromani. BI, Calcutta, 1873 1911.

standard works both in the South and the North. He was cited by Mādhava and Madanapāla.

Over two centuries after Hemādri, when the kingdom of Devagiri passed to the Muslim rulers, one Dalapati, sometimes called a Mahārājādhirāja, was the minister and keeper of imperial records, like Hemādri, of a Muslim overlord named Nijamsaha, probably identical with Ahmad Nizam Shah (A.D. 1490-1508). He composed an encyclopaedic work named the *Nṛsiṁha-prasāda* in twelve parts, including one on *vyavahāra*; it was, therefore, more comprehensive than Hemādri's book. It is a notable instance of the tolerance of a powerful Muslim ruler in allowing his minister to write a Hindu code with his name subscribed.

The rest of the South Indian works—and their number is quite large—cannot unfortunately be referred to exact localities and particular patrons. Among them, Devaṇṇa Bhaṭṭa's *Smṛti-candrikā*,[35] an extensive digest very frequently cited by Hemādri, is regarded as a great authority, next only to the *Mitākṣarā*, in civil law in the Madras State. As he has named Aparārka, his date is fixed at about A.D. 1200. The *Smṛtyārtha-sāra* of Śrīdhara[36] is another famous book, which must have been composed about A.D. 1150, as it was already cited by Devaṇṇa Bhaṭṭa. Nṛsiṁhācārya, the celebrated author of the *Kāla-nirṇaya-dīpikā-vivaraṇa* (A.D. 1409), wrote another authoritative book *Prayoga-pārijāta* in five parts—that on the *saṁskāras* has been published.[37] We close with the mention of the *Vyavahāra-nirṇaya* of Varadarāja, mentioned in the *Sarasvatī-vilāsa* as a 'recent' author, who probably preceded Mādhavācārya.[38]

UNDER BRITISH RULE

Early in the British period, there were laudable attempts on the part of the foreign rulers to codify the civil laws of the Hindus in select matters. We mention here two interesting compilations which were used in the courts for a long time to decide cases of Hindu law. Eleven eminent scholars 'from all parts of the kingdom' readily responded to an invitation from Warren Hastings and came over to Fort William, Calcutta, where with the help of authentic books they compiled a code in Sanskrit called the *Vivādārṇava-setu* in February, A.D. 1775. The greatest and the oldest among them was Rāmagopāla Nyāyālaṅkāra, who came from Navadvīpa, the greatest centre of learning in that region. For a long time he was the leading Smārta of Bengal, and his position as such was in no way inferior to the chief judge

[35] Ed. by J. R. Ghorpare. Bombay, 1918.
[36] Ed. by R. S. Vaidya. ASS, Poona, 1912.
[37] Published from Bombay (1916).
[38] Published by the Adyar Library (1941), edited by K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar.

of the Supreme Court. He died about A.D. 1791 at the great age of 100 years, and his wife became a *satī*.[39] The code was first translated in Persian and therefrom into English. Jones found out that the original was succinct in the law of contracts, and the translation had no authority. So at his suggestion a more ample repertory of the Hindu laws of contracts and inheritances was undertaken and entrusted to Jagannātha Tarkapañcānana of Triveṇī, who finished the original, named the *Vivāda-bhaṅgārṇava*, in A.D. 1792 with the assistance of his own six pupils. Jagannātha was the most learned and the most long-lived scholar of Bengal and died in A.D. 1807 at the age of 114. Colebrooke translated the huge book in A.D. 1798 in four large volumes, and this English version guided the courts for a long time, though the original remains unpublished.

CONCLUSION

The contents of the Nibandhas fall under three main heads, corresponding to the three chapters of the *Yājñavalkya Saṁhitā*, viz. *ācāra*, *vyavahāra*, and *prāyaścitta*. The supreme end of all the three streams of regulations elaborated therein is an all-round perfection of the individual in his religious, civil, and moral relations. The ramifications of each branch are almost as numerous as the circumstances of human life. After the establishment of Muslim rule in many parts of the country, there was a great check on the development of the *vyavahāra* part of the Indian digests, as many of the provisions of the civil and criminal laws elaborated therein became inoperative in the country at large, and were observed only in a few pockets of Hindu monarchies that raised their heads from time to time. This is reflected in the remarkable fact that hardly a dozen pre-British works on *vivāda* (civil law) have survived, and the number of extant works on *vyavahāra* (judicial procedure) is comparatively very small.

The establishment of a foreign power of a different race and faith in India acted, however, as a special inducement to the Hindus to zealously guard their *dharma* from dissolution. For the fact remains that the non-civil part of the literature developed during this period to a pitch almost unparalleled in literary history, and the number of works so far discovered is already legion. The sacred trust of the king as the ultimate dispenser of justice now reposed in the social institutions that flourished everywhere in spite of the foreign domination. The literature forms, therefore, the most important material for the social and religious history of India in the Muslim period. The fundamental identity of ideology running through

[39] N. B. Halhead, *A Code of Gento Laws* (London, 1776), Preliminary Discourse, p. 5, and Preface, p. 6; W. Ward, *Account of the Writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos* (Serampore, 1811), II., p. 560

the whole literature constituted its real strength ; the idea of the whole man, where the mere citizen was never divorced from his religious and spiritual entity, powerfully appealed to the public at large till the British times. Lakṣmīdhara, Hemādri, and Mitra Miśra significantly included a part on salvation in their codes of law. Upon the bed-rock of this unity of purpose flourished the network of the various schools and sub-schools of law, creating a great solidarity and cohesion among the various classes of society, which enabled it to hold its own against heavy odds. Their rivalry related to differences in intricate minor details and theoretical views only, with ever increasing intellectual appeals. In practice, a sinner in Cochin, for instance, would be prescribed the same course of penance as one in Assam. Every civilized society is initially confronted with the danger of the brute in man overpowering his divinity. The rigours of civil and religious laws prescribed by the Nibandhas were able to dispel this danger completely and more successfully, we should say, than modern codes of law. In the language of Lakṣmīdhara, as he wrote at the commencement of the *dāna* and *niyata-kāla* chapters of his digest, the Iron Age (*kali*) was completely kept under check by the prescribed performances.. Under a bigoted foreign domination, *kali* again attempted to scare away *dharma*, and if the magnitude of the great danger is calculated, the success achieved by the literature under review can by no means be regarded as small. This success excites our admiration all the more when it is considered that the literature grew up under the most distressing conditions ; there was no state sanction to support it, nor any sympathies for the ideals from the alien rulers. There is a tendency among recent scholars to criticize the authors of the Nibandhas adversely for raising subtle arguments and revolving within narrow grooves. It is, however, generally forgotten that the Nibandhas were designed not only for the purpose of regulating society, but also for constituting a separate branch of literature for studies in the advanced academies, where intricacy of arguments is not certainly regarded as a fault. Śrīkṛṣṇa of the Bengal school catered for society by composing the admirable and handy monograph on inheritance called the *Dāya-krama-saṁgraha*, and at the same time delighted the academicians by his extremely intricate commentary of the *Dāya-bhāga*. Moreover, the role of the academies as an important factor in society should not be underestimated.

23

PENANCES AND VOWS

ONE of the three main pillars upon which the superstructure of *dharma* (duty) rests is designated as *prāyaścitta* (penance), a highly technical term coined by the Indian sages and universally adopted everywhere in India from the earliest times. The highest perfection of man cannot be attained unless his religious and civil conduct (*ācāra* and *vyavahāra*) is refined by a proper regulation of his moral and spiritual relations. The Indian sages started with this fundamental concept, and its realization led to the formulation from very ancient times of an elaborate scheme of penances and vows, which sought to eliminate all sins and evils from society.

LITERATURE ON PENANCE

Any student will be struck by the vastness, antiquity, and remarkable continuity of Sanskrit literature on penance, which forms an integral part of the Dharma-śāstra. It is dealt with by all the extant Dharma-Sūtras, notably those of *Gautama,*[1] *Baudhāyana,*[2] *Āpastamba,*[3] *Vasiṣṭha,*[4] and *Viṣṇu,*[5] as well as by most of the comprehensive Saṁhitās and Nibandhas. There are, besides, a large number of independent treatises on penance, about a hundred of which have been listed by Kane.[6] Of the Nibandhas, the *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa* of Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa[7] is the earliest and probably the best book on the subject now available in print, and forms, together with the standard works of Śūlapāṇi and Raghunandana, the three ruling authorities on the subject in the Bengal school. One of the last works on the subject is the *Prāyaścitta-vyavasthā-saṁgraha* of Kāśīnātha Tarkālaṅkāra, who lived in Calcutta and died in A.D. 1857 ; it was published in the life-time of the author in Śaka 1774 (A.D. 1852). Kāśīnātha was a distinguished pupil of the famous Jagannātha Tarkapañcānana and a leading Smārta of his time. From Gautama, who is supposed to be the earliest among the writers of the surviving Dharma-Sūtras, to Kāśīnātha there is almost an unbroken period of nearly 2,500 years, during which time the moral foundations of the Aryan culture stood like a rock against waves of hostile forces. The innumerable writers and exponents of the literature on penance played an important part in this great array. But while Gautama

[1] Chs. 19-27.
[2] II.
[3] *Praśna* I
[4] Chs. XX-XXV.
[5] Chs. 33-55.
[6] *H. Dh.*, I. pp. 591-4.
[7] Rajshahi Ed., 1927.

was hailed as a great sage in his time, Kāśīnātha had to face an aggressive modernism in the metropolis of British India.

PENANCE IN THE VEDAS

There are many Vedic texts where expiation of sins by means of penances is referred to. One interesting case is cited here. Manu[8] states that a penance may be performed even for an intentional act of sin on the strength of the Vedic texts. According to Medhātithi, 'the legend of Upahavya' (Upahavya-Brāhmaṇa) should be cited here as an illustration. Indra, the chief of the gods, threw some (heretic) ascetics unto wild dogs.[9] It was obviously an intentional act, technically constituting a *brahma-hatyā* (murder of a Brāhmaṇa, the highest of sins), for which a censure confronted him. Indra ran to Prajāpati, who prescribed as a penance a single-day Vedic rite thenceforth called *upahavya*. The whole text as cited and explained by Kullūka is found in the *Taṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa*,[10] where Indra is stated to have expiated the same sin by other similar means.[11] Viśvarūpa in his commentary[12] based his arguments on the same Vedic text, more fully cited. The most striking feature of the story is the fact that Indra went through all the essentials of a penance as performed in India even today for the commitment of a sin—repentance through public censure (or the bidding of conscience, the word *aślīla* may after all mean *aśarīra*), approaching the proper authority for the prescription of a penance, and its actual performance. It only proves that a convention had already grown about the practice of penances in the age of the Brāhmaṇas.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF PENANCES

According to Medhātithi[13] the word *prāyaścitta* denotes in a traditional sense (*rūḍhi*) a particular kind of 'causal' (*naimittika*) act. Bhavadeva, however, quotes a verse, ascribed to Aṅgiras by Śūlapāṇi and others, which derives the word as a compound of *prāyas* meaning austerity and *citta* meaning resolution. Raghunandana defines it on the basis of a text of Hārīta, cited and explained by him, that a penance is an act enjoined in a sacred precept as the means of only removing sins.[14] The occasion for penances is the widest possible range of offences, for, according to the well-known texts of Manu[15] and Yājñavalkya,[16] supported by older authorities,

[8] XI. 45.
[9] *Taitt. Saṁh.*, VI. 2. 7. 5.
[10] XVIII. 1. 9; Chowkhamba Ed., II. p. 305.
[11] VIII. 1. 4; XIII. 4. 17; XIV. 11. 29; XIX. 4. 7.
[12] On *Yāj.*, III. 212, Trivandrum Ed., II. p. 81.
[13] On *Manu*, XI. 44.
[14] *Prāyaścitta-tattva*, p. 5. This definition has been subjected to intricate analysis, e.g. by the famous commentator Gosvāmin Bhaṭṭācārya, to the delight of the academicians.
[15] XI. 44.
[16] III. 219.

a man who omits a prescribed act, or performs a blamable one, or cleaves to sensual enjoyments, must perform a penance. According to the interpretation of Medhātithi and Viśvarūpa, it extends to all the four castes i.e. in the language of Govindarāja, to every man. The law of penances is mainly founded on the correct interpretation of these basic texts. Medhātithi clearly states that the real incentive to the performance of an act—and in the above text of Manu the reference is to all obligatory acts whose omission is an 'offence' (*pratyavāya*)—is traceable in the *arthavāda* (exegesis) portion of the Vedas; for, the fear complex stirred up therein is, as stated in a cited text, an infinitely more powerful force than the injunctions.

In this connection a pertinent question arises that has been a matter of great controversy among the Indian philosophers and writers on the Dharma-śāstra: whether an act of penance can remove the effects of an act of sin. One opinion is, as stated pointedly by Gautama,[17] the earliest among the authors of the Dharma-Sūtras now extant, that penances should not be done, 'because the deed does not perish'. After Gautama onwards all the writers on *dharma* agree that penances do remove the effects of sinful acts. Medhātithi refuted an opinion[18] that acts cannot perish without giving effects which must be tasted, but the non-performance of penances in each case creates an extra sin. This compromise is unacceptable to the Smārtas. Śūlapāṇi, for instance, restricts the above rule beyond the pale of penances.[19] The efficacy of penances is also accepted in the Purāṇas, where sectarian views are promulgated on that basis. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*,[20] for instance, regards the recollection of the name of Hari as the best penance for all repentant sinners, and according to the commentator Śrīdhara Svāmin, other penances are nevertheless useful for those who do not believe in the name of Hari.

The institution of penances, moreover, is based on certain notions and beliefs which are confirmed articles of faith in the Aryan culture. The mythological conception of heaven and hell is one such fundamental thing, which is ingrained in the whole Indian literature from the Vedic period.

PENANCES AND HELLS

The relation between penances and hells is clearly stated in the *Yājñavalkya Saṁhitā*[21]—men addicted to sins without repentance and without

[17] XIX. 4-5.

[18] Cited under *Manu*, XI. 46.

[19] *Dīpakalikā* (Gharpure's Ed., p. 94): *Nābhuktaṁ kṣīyate karmetyādi prāyaścittetara-viṣayam.*

[20] II. 6. 36.

[21] III. 221.

[22] Trivandrum Ed., II. p. 84.

performing penances go to hells. According to Viśvarūpa,[22] this applies only to intentional sinners and not to those who commit sins unintentionally. Twenty-one hells are enumerated here by Yājñavalkya,[23] which fairly agree with the list given by Manu.[24] The various Purāṇas also agree that the hells are for those who do not perform penances for sinful acts.[25] The number and description of these zones, however, vary in the different Purāṇas considerably.[26] It should be mentioned here that both Manu[27] and Yājñavalkya[28] include *nāstikya* (heresy) among minor sins (*upapātakas*), and the term primarily means, according to Medhātithi and others, disbelief in the existence of the 'other world' (of heavens and hells). The mention of hells in the very first line of the section on penances in *Yājñavalkya* points to the inseparable connection between the two, which is further proved by the fact that for the words 'man must perform a penance' in the basic text of Manu[29] cited above, Yājñavalkya substitutes the words 'man courts a hell' in the corresponding passage.[30] Viśvarūpa curiously interprets the phrase 'addiction to sensual enjoyments' both in *Manu* and *Yājñavalkya* as equivalent to 'non-performance of penances'.[31]

KARMA-VIPĀKA

Another fundamental article of faith established in the Dharma-śāstra literature is the theory of *karma-vipāka* or the ripening of antenatal acts. This is essentially based on the connected theory of the transmigration of souls, and according to it all diseases of the human body are the result of sinful acts committed in previous lives. In some cases, according to Manu,[32] they are the result of misdeeds committed in the present life as well. Manu[33] and Yājñavalkya[34] cite a few interesting instances of the working of the theory e.g. a stealer of food (in a former life) suffers from dyspepsia (in the present life). These are in consequence of a remnant of former misdeeds, subsisting after the inescapable hell-life fated to the unrepentant.[35] Another consequence of such misdeeds is a rebirth among the lower animals, and Yājñavalkya[36] has specified them by way of example for the mortal sinners. Penances prescribed for the repentant are considered to have the power of removing all the three successive horrors of hells, animal lives, and human afflictions.

[22] III. 222-4. [23] IV. 88-90. [24] Cf. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, II. 6. 32.
[25] Kane, *H. Dh.*, I. p. 165. The *Padma Purāṇa* gives a list of one hundred and forty hells.
[26] XI. 67. [27] III. 236. [28] XI. 44.
[29] Cf. the word '*patanam*' in III. 219, which, according to Śūlapāṇi, means 'hell'.
[30] Trivandrum Ed., II. pp. 78-9. [31] XI. 48.
[32] XI. 49-53. [33] III. 207-15.
[34] *Manu*, XI. 53, with the correct reading '*karmāvaśiṣeṇa*' as explained by Medhātithi, Govindarāja, and Kullūka. The word '*karmakṣayāt*' in the corresponding text of Yājñavalkya (III. 206) is explained exactly in the same way by Viśvarūpa (p. 73).
[35] III. 207-8.

The theory so briefly sketched by Manu, Yājñavalkya, and other ancient sages was later on elaborated into a regular scheme, and an important section of the Dharma-śāstra named *karma-vipāka* grew up on the subject. The well-known manual ascribed to the ancient sage Śātātapa and long available in print is a comparatively late work—the reading of the *Harivaṁśa*[37] is a penance prescribed in it. Many famous authors composed separate books on the subject. We mention only the *Mahārṇava* in forty chapters, a sister work of the famous *Madana-pārijāta*.[38] It appears that no specific penances for antenatal misdeeds inferred from the present bodily ailments were known to Medhātithi,[39] who applies the rule of Gautama in the matter—'the *kṛcchra* and *atikṛcchra* and the lunar penance' for all unspecified sins, though he also cites a text of Vasiṣṭha, recommending a partial observance of the penance suitable for each supposed original sin. At present, however, almost every disease is taken by the above theory to be caused by a particular sin of the previous birth, and an appropriate penance is prescribed and duly performed before death by a good number of the believing public.

CLASSIFICATION OF SINS

All ancient sages from Gautama downwards have divided sins into two broad classes, viz. *mahāpātakas* (mortal sins) and *upapātakas* (minor sins). There is practically no difference of opinion in the enumeration of the former; they are: killing a Brāhmaṇa, drinking wine, stealing, and adultery with a *guru's* wife. They unmistakably point to the four corner-stones of Aryan criminology, and their bracketing together lends colour in a peculiar manner to the Indian standard of morality. The murder of a Brāhmaṇa as the greatest of all crimes is already an admitted fact in Vedic times. One such Vedic text is cited by Viśvarūpa.[40] Association with the four above mortal sinners is regarded as the fifth great sin, after which both Manu[41] and Yājñavalkya[42] enumerate a number of sins which are equal to the four great sins. Falsely accusing one's teacher, for instance, is regarded as 'equal' to *brahmahatyā* (killing a Brāhmaṇa). A long list of the minor sins (*upapātakas*) follows in *Manu*[43] and *Yājñavalkya*.[44] These lists differ considerably in the different texts and are not, as pointed out by Viśvarūpa,[45] exhaustive in any way. Cow-killing tops the list of the minor sins.

Bhavadeva arranges all sins in a more scientific way under five categories, viz. murder, taking forbidden food, theft, adultery, and association

[37] II. 30. [38] Kane, *H. Dh.*, I. 382 f. [39] On *Manu*, XI. 47.
[40] On *Yāj.*, III. 221; Trivandrum Ed., II., p. 81.
[41] XI. 56-9. [42] III. 228-31. [43] XI. 60-71.
[44] III. 234-41. [45] Trivandrum Ed., II. p. 93.

with the wicked. They are dealt with in five successive chapters of his *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa*,[46] which ends with a small chapter, the sixth and last on the nature of the 'hard' penances. The book opens with a brilliant dialectic on the term 'murder';[47] according to his analysis, a murderer is of seven kinds, or of fourteen with intention as an additional factor.

Śūlapāṇi in the *Dīpakalikā*[48] and the *Prāyaścitta-viveka* adopts a better and more detailed classification on the authority of *Viṣṇu Dharma-Sūtra* and *Saṁvarta*. The deadliest sins called *atipātakas* are adultery with one's mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law. If intentional, no sort of penance, not even suicide, can expiate them. Next come the well-known *mahāpātakas*, while their equals are placed in a separate class, next in order, named *anupātakas*. A miscellaneous class is added at the end. The *Śabdakalpadruma* (under the word *prāyaścitta*) adopts a nine-fold classification, adding four minor classes after the longest list of *upapātakas*.

PENANCES AND OTHER MEANS OF EXPIATION

There is wide divergence among the sages in the matter of formulating the exact means of expiation of the various sins. The great task before the authors of the Nibandhas is to reconcile the ancient texts and evolve out of them a uniform law of penances. Viśvarūpa's commentary on the section of *prāyaścitta* in *Yājñavalkya*, which can well pass for a separate book, is the first attempt to bring the conflicting views on the subject to a harmony. The ever expanding literature on the subject that grew up subsequently succeeded in evolving a regular code of penances applicable in all parts of India. The word *prāyaścitta* in a wide sense covers all the various means of expiation, only a few typical specimens of which are touched below.

1. In the earlier Vedic period, 'Vedic rites and recitals' were largely prescribed and performed as penance. Gautama in his *Dharma-Sūtra*[50] mentions twenty-one purificatory texts which include nine *sāmans*. In the typical section on Brāhmaṇa-killing, Manu[51] prescribes among numerous alternatives the horse sacrifice and six (or four, according to Medhātithi) other Vedic rites as well as thrice reciting a whole Veda.[52] But these privileges of kings and others of higher caste were never open to the lower classes, and they fell away in the course of time. Bhavadeva altogether omits them, and under cow-killing makes the interesting remark that the conflicting views of ancient sages about the penances of cow-killing evidently

[46] Rajshahi Ed., 1927, pp. 127-32.
[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-8.
[48] On *Yāj.*, III. 259; Trivandrum Ed., II, p. 99.
[49] Chs. 34-42.
[50] XIX. 12.
[51] XI. 75.
[52] *Manu*, XI. 77.

refer to various holy sacrificial milch-cows. These sacrifices were not in vogue in his time.[53]

2. The hardest penance prescribed and largely practised in ancient and mediaeval India was 'suicide' in various spectacular manners. According to Viṣṇu,[54] followed among others by Śūlapāṇi, all guilty of *atipātakas* (incest with mother, daughter and daughter-in-law) should enter a burning fire, and no other penance exists for them. According to Manu,[55] a Brāhmaṇa-killer should willingly become the target of archers or throw himself thrice headlong into a blazing fire. Yājñavalkya[56] prescribes the alternative that he should offer the vital parts of his body as oblations into the fire with appropriate incantations—till he is dead, according to Bhavadeva;[57] Viśvarūpa,[58] however, comments that it is not a death-penance. Various other death-penances are prescribed for the remaining three *mahāpātakas*. Their scope and function have been regularized by Bhavadeva, Śūlapāṇi, and other authors.[59]

3. The hardest penance, next to suicide, is the 'twelve years' vow' prescribed by Manu[60] and Yājñavalkya[61] for Brāhmaṇa-killers. This requires the (unintentional) homicide to dwell in a hut in the forest, subsisting on alms and making the dead man's skull his badge. Bhavadeva[62] makes here an important statement that an age-old irreproachable convention had grown in his time to equate this very hard twelve years' forest-life of exacting duties to an easier one of domestic penance named *prājāpatya* to continue for the same length of time. It is, moreover, converted to a life-long penance[63] when the victims are the parents and other near relatives. Many lesser penances are calculated on the basis of this twelve years' vow.

4. The penances proper that pass by the well-known term *kṛcchra* (hard) are described already in the *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*,[64] from which Gautama[65] and all later sages and authors have borrowed and amplified. These are mainly the *sāntapana* (subsisting on the five products of cows for a day followed by a day's fast), the five-day *parṇa-kṛcchra* (drinking only water boiled with five kinds of leaves), the four-day *tapta-kṛcchra* with

[53] *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa* (Rajshahi, 1927), p. 33: *'Idānīṁ-tu tathā-vidha-gavābhāvena vyavahārānaṅgatvān-na pratyekaṁ viṣaya-vyavasthayā vyākhyātānīti'*. This is a clear proof that the Vedic religion was very much in decay in Bengal about A.D. 1100, when Bhavadeva flourished, though he was himself a profound scholar of the Mīmāṁsā. It appears that the theoretical and dialectical portion of the system still delighted the scholars of Bengal.

[54] XXXIV. 1-2. [55] XI. 74. [56] III. 247.

[57] *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa*, p. 8. [58] Trivandrum Ed., II. pp. 99-100.

[59] The intricate subject of suicide, which is generally condemned in the Dharma-śāstra, though recommended as a penance, is ably treated by Kane (*H. Dh.*, II. p. 924-8). Suicide was largely practised in India, and there are historical examples recorded in royal inscriptions.

[60] XI. 73. [61] III.243. [62] *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa*, p 11.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 13. [64] I. 2. [65] XXVI.

hot water, milk, clarified butter and air; the twelve-day *prājāpatya* (a combination of three morning meals, three evening meals, three unasked for meals, and three fasts successively); the twelve-day *parāka* fast, and the lunar penance *cāndrāyaṇa* with food regulated by the phases of the moon. Their observance in many more intricate forms has not yet completely vanished from the austere section of the Aryans.

5. Among other means of expiation 'the gift of cows' is prominently mentioned by sages like Āpastamba,[66] Manu,[67] and Yājñavalkya.[68] In one case Manu[69] prescribes a *kṛcchra*, which normally means the *prājāpatya*, when one is unable to make the proper gift. This suggests an equation of a twelve days' vow with the gift of a single milch cow, as actually stated in a text of Mārkaṇḍeya cited by Bhavadeva.[70] Accordingly, all the hard penances have long been converted by a convenient convention to such gifts, for the benefit of the rich who are unable to observe the former. A twelve years' vow, for instance, is equal to a gift of three hundred and sixty milch cows.[71] By one more subsequent convention, elaborately worked out by Śūlapāṇi, the latter again is convertible to its money value, the traditional price of a cow accepted for calculation being only three copper coins. Such gifts of money as penance are still largely practised in India.

All penances are practised subject to certain common rules. They are doubled when the sins are committed intentionally, and are reduced to half for minor, old, invalid, and women sinners. They are performed openly when the sins are known to the public, but secretly otherwise. These secret penances, somewhat different from the public ones, are specially noted by Bhavadeva and other authors on the basis of ancient texts.[72] The two well-known classes of virtues *yama* and *niyama* (self-control) are enumerated by Yājñavalkya under penance.[74] On the other hand, the main aim of a penance is the purification of the soul (*ātmaśuddhi*). This moral and spiritual appeal runs through the whole literature on penance, imparting an elevating character to it.

Those who do not perform penances out of heresy are in the first instance dealt with by the people of their respective communities, who must ostracize them in the Indian style.[75] For, the effect of a penance is the fitness for social fellowship (*saṁvyava-hāryatā*). Secondly, they come under the provisions of the *daṇḍa* (criminal law) and are inflicted as corporal punishment and fines.[76] If, however, they perform the due penances fines alone are to be imposed on them.[77]

[66] I. 9. 24. 1. [67] XI. 128, 130-1, etc. [68] III. 266-7.
[69] XI. 140. [70] *Prāyaścitta-prakaraṇa*, p. 11. [71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Manu*, XI. 249-66; *Yāj.*, III. 302-14; etc.
[73] *Manu*, XI. 228-43. [74] III. 313-4. [75] *Manu*, XI. 183-6.
[76] *Ibid.*, IX. 236-9. [77] *Ibid.*, IX. 240-1.

The law of penances is to be administered by an assembly (*pariṣad*) consisting of three members learned in the Vedas, according to Manu,[78] though by a text of Yama (cited by Raghunandana in the *Prāyaścitta-tattva*) one or two members also would suffice. They must be well read in the Mīmāṁsā and Dharma-śāstra. Such a competent person must not refuse to state the proper penance to a penitent, who again must approach him with due respect and ceremoniously ask him for a ruling in the open assembly. Auspicious moments are observed for the purpose. The Brāhmaṇa administering the law should be properly remunerated. Formerly, it was the gift of a milch cow and a bull or garments. At present a written ruling duly signed is obtained by a penitent with some money, and in matters of controversy, healthy disputes arise among scholars over it.

The law of penances, we conclude, comes under and forms only a part of the great law of castes and orders universally established among the Aryans in India from very ancient times. This explains why Gautama in his *Dharma-Sūtra* commences the chapter on penances with the head-line 'Laws of castes and orders'.[79] To shut our eyes under the blinding forces of modernism against the achievements of these ancient institutions subsisting through the millenniums, is in a sense denying the first lesson of Indian history that she possesses an undying culture and a glorious past.

[78] XI. 86.
[79] *Varṇāśramadharma*, XIX. 1.

24

HINDU SACRAMENTS (SAṀSKĀRAS)

HINDUISM as an organized religion provides a comprehensive scheme for the enlightenment, elevation, and purification of man. Broadly speaking, the whole integrated scheme of Hindu thought and practice is divided into: (1) *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, (2) *upāsanā-kāṇḍa*, and (3) *karma-kāṇḍa*. The term *kāṇḍa* here signifies a branch or department; and *jñāna*, *upāsanā*, and *karma* denote respectively knowledge, meditation, and action as taught by the scriptures. But the word *karma*, when used in the general sense, covers all the activities of a person, including the practice of universal ethical virtues, general and particular social duties, and symbolic and mystic rituals. The last-mentioned item, again, has a very wide scope, as it includes all sorts of religious or socio-religious ceremonies. The sacraments form an important section of the *karma-kāṇḍa*, because they are believed to reform and sanctify the person for whom they are performed, marking various occasions of his life from conception in the mother's womb to the cremation of the body at death; they have influence even beyond death, as they determine the course of the soul. Besides the obvious material and cultural value of the sacraments, the Mīmāṁsakas developed a theory about the potency of sacramental rituals, assuming a category known as *apūrva* or *adṛṣṭa*, which relates the visible ritualistic act to the result aimed at by it, namely, the sanctification of the recipient. *Karma* flawlessly performed purifies the mind; and when it is in the form of a sacrament, it brings about the complete sanctification of the personality.

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM SAṀSKĀRA

The nearest English word by which the term *saṁskāra* may be translated is *sacrament*. The common word *ceremony* does not give the full and precise meaning; for *saṁskāra* does not mean merely 'an outward rite or observance which is religious or held sacred'. It has been defined as 'a peculiar excellence accruing from the performance of the rites ordained (by the Śāstras)—an excellence residing either in the soul or in the body'.[1] The word sacrament is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* thus: 'Religious ceremony or act regarded as outward and visible sign of inward or spiritual grace'; and this is applicable to *saṁskāra* also.

The Sanskrit word *saṁskāra* is derived from the root *kṛ* with the prefix *sam* and suffix *ghañ* added, and is used in different senses. The various

[1] *Ātma-śarīrānyatara-niṣṭho vihita-kriyā-janyaḥ atiśaya-viśeṣaḥ saṁskāraḥ.*

systems of philosophy employ it to signify different meanings: an attribute of sacrificial objects arising from sprinkling and the like (Mīmāṁsakas); a false attribution of physical action to the soul (Advaita Vedāntins); self-reproductive quality or faculty of impression (Naiyāyikas); and so forth. In classical Sanskrit literature, *saṁskāra* has the sense of education, cultivation, training;[2] refinement, perfection, and grammatical purity;[3] polishing, embellishment, decoration, and ornament;[5] impression, form, mould, operation, and influence;[6] conative tendency which gives rise to recollected knowledge;[7] a purificatory rite, a sacred rite or ceremony, consecration, sanctification, and hallowing;[8] effect of past work, merit of action;[9] etc. Thus it may be seen that the Hindu sacraments aimed at not only the formal purification of the body but also at sanctifying, impressing, refining, and perfecting the entire individuality of the recipient, producing a special merit in him.

THE SCOPE AND NUMBER OF THE SAṀSKĀRAS

The first systematic attempt at describing the *saṁskāras* is found in the Gṛhya-Sūtras. But they do not use the term *saṁskāra* in its proper and peculiar sense, as they adopt its Mīmāṁsā meaning and include the *saṁskāra* proper in the list of the domestic sacrifices. In these *sūtras* there seems to be no clear distinction drawn between sacrifices in general and the *saṁskāras* performed to sanctify the body and perfect the personality. It is in the *Vaikhānasa-smārta-Sūtras*[10] that a clear distinction between the *saṁskāras* relating to the body (*aṣṭādaśa saṁskārāḥ śārīrāḥ*) and sacrifices in general is met. The twenty-two sacrifices separately mentioned are also included there in the list of the bodily *saṁskāras*, but which are really speaking daily and occasional sacrifices.

The Gṛhya-Sūtras[11] generally deal with the bodily *saṁskāras* beginning with *vivāha* (marriage) and ending in *samāvartana* (graduation). The majority of them omit *antyeṣṭi* (funeral), perhaps because of impurity and inauspiciousness attached to the dead body; the Gṛhya-Sūtras of Pāraskara, Āśvalāyana, and Baudhāyana have sections dealing with it. The number of *saṁskāras* in the Gṛhya-Sūtras fluctuate between twelve and eighteen.

[2] *Nisarga-saṁskāra-vinīta ity asau nṛpeṇa cakre yuvarāja-śabda-bhāk.*—*Raghuvaṁśa.* V. 3. 35.
[3] *Saṁskāravatyeva girā manīṣī, tayā sa pūtaśca vibhūṣitaśca.*—*Kumārasambhava*, I. 28.
[4] *Prayuka-saṁskāra ivādhkaṁ babhau.*—*Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 18.
[5] *Svabhāva-sundaraṁ vastu na saṁskāraṁ apekṣate* –*Abhijñāna-śakuntala*, VII. 23.
[6] *Yan nave bhājane lagnaḥ saṁskāro nanyathā bhavet.*—*Hitopadeśa*, I. 8.
[7] *Saṁskāra-janyaṁ jñānaṁ smṛtiḥ.*—*Tarka-saṁgraha.*
[8] *Kāryaḥ śarīra-saṁskāraḥ pāvanaḥ pretya ceha ca.*—*Manu*, II.
[9] *Phalānumeyāḥ prārambhāḥ saṁskārāḥ prāktanā iva.*—*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 20.
[10] I. 1.
[11] *Āśvalāyana Gṛ. S.*, I. 3. 1; *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 1. 2; *Gobhila Gṛ. S.*, *Khadira Gṛ. S.*, I. 2. 1; *Baudhāyana Gṛ. S.*, I. 1. 1.

In course of time sixteen became the classical number comprising the following: (1) *garbhādhāna* (conception), (2) *puṁsavana* (engendering a male issue), (3) *sīmantonnayana* (parting the hair), (4) *jātakarman* (natal rites), (5) *nāmakaraṇa* (naming), (6) *niṣkramaṇa* (first outing), (7) *annaprāśana* (first feeding with boiled rice), (8) *cūḍākaraṇa* (tonsure), (9) *karṇa-vedha* (piercing the ear lobes), (10) *vidyārambha* or *akṣarārambha* (learning the alphabet), (11) *upanayana* (holy thread ceremony), (12) *vedārambha* (first study of the Vedas), (13) *keśānta* (cutting the hair), (14) *samāvartana* (graduation), (15) *vivāha* (marriage), and (16) *antyeṣṭi* (funeral). Of these items (10), (12), and (13) are later in origin.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SAṀSKĀRAS

The *saṁskāras* are first of all based on the simple unquestioned faith of the unsophisticated mind; and so they have a popular import. The Hindus of early times believed that they were surrounded by superhuman influences, good or evil; and they sought to remove the evil influences by the various means they devised for the purpose, and they invoked the beneficial ones for affording them timely help. Among the means adopted for the removal of evil influences, the first was propitiation. When the unfavourable power was propitiated, it turned away without injuring the person purified by the *saṁskāra*.[12] The second means was deception.[13] The evil influences were diverted either by hiding the person exposed to them or by offering his substitute. The third means was to resort to threat and direct attack—when the above two methods failed—either by the person himself or by any one officiating or administering authority.[14] The gods were also invoked to prevent the evil influences reaching the recipient of the *saṁskāra*. Water, fire, noise, a staff, or other materials were also employed for driving away the troublesome influences.

Just as hostile influences were shunned by people, favourable influences were attracted and invited for their benefit. It was believed that every period of a man's life was presided over by a deity, and therefore, whenever occasion arose, that deity was invoked to confer boons and blessings on the person concerned. Men help themselves also. Suggestions and references to analogous phenomena played a great part in attracting favourable influences. Touching, breathing, feeding, anointment, dramatic utterances, etc. were frequently used for this purpose.

In the next place, *saṁskāras* have a cultural purpose governing the evolution of the society, because they comprehend sacrifices and rites that

[12] *Tatastuṣṭa evam kumāram muñca.—Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 16. 20.
[13] *Anuguptam etam sakeśaṁ gomaya-piṇḍaṁ etc.—Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II.
[14] *Āpastamba Gṛ. S.*, I. 15.

have for their aim domestic felicity resulting from the gain of cattle, progeny, long life, wealth, prosperity, strength, and intellectual vigour. Though not outside the common run of men, the priest who was above the masses, further introduced considerable refinement in the customs and rites of the society in various ways. He always welcomed and blessed the material aspirations of the householders and attempted to sanctify the members of the community and help them in their spiritual growth.

The cultural purpose sought to be served by the ancient Hindu rites and ceremonies chiefly related to the formation and development of personality. 'Just as a picture is painted with various colours, so the character of a person is formed by his undergoing various *saṁskāras* properly.'[15] The Hindu sages realized the need of consciously moulding the character of individuals born into their society, instead of letting them grow in a haphazard way. This moulding of character was, however, not mere patternizing; rather it aimed at affording the subject timely orientation and help.

Thirdly, the performance of the *saṁskāras* served the purpose of self-expression. The householder was not for ever a terror-stricken beggar petitioning the gods for favours. He performed the *saṁskāras* also for expressing his own joys, felicitations, and even sorrows (as, for instance, the death ceremony) at the various events of life.

Apart from the popular and cultural purposes served by the *saṁskāras*, according to the seers and the lawgivers, they helped also in imparting to life a higher religious sanctity. Impurity associated with the material body—real or imaginary—is removed by the performance of the *saṁskāras*. The whole body is consecrated and made a fit dwelling place for the soul. 'The body is made a fit instrument for realizing Brahman by Vedic studies, observance of the vows, offering of oblations, performance of sacrifices, procreation of children, and practising the five *mahā-yajñas* (great sacrifices), and *yajñas*.'[16] The theory is still current that a man is born a Śūdra; he becomes a twice-born (*dvija*) by the performance of *saṁskāras*; by acquiring the Vedic lore he becomes a *vipra* (an inspired poet); and by attaining Brahman he becomes a Brāhmaṇa.[17] However, the *saṁskāras* were never regarded as ends by themselves; they were performed to help the growth and ripening of moral virtues. Gautama,[18] while emphasizing the necessity of undergoing the *saṁskāras*, clearly points out that the *saṁskāras* are by themselves ineffectual in leading man to the ultimate goal of existence, unless the virtues of the soul (*ātma-guṇas*) were also developed. So the

[15] *Par. Sm.*, VIII. 19.
[16] *Manu*, II. 28.
[17] Cf. *Atri. Sm.*, 141-42.
[18] VIII. 24.

various *saṁskāras* performed at different stages of life are hedged with appropriate rules of conduct prescribed in detail.

The general outlook of the Hindu mind helps to transform the *saṁskāras* into a spiritual *sādhana* (exercise).[19] Their spiritual significance cannot be given visual demonstration, but may be experienced by those who receive the sacraments. Each *saṁskāra* conveys to them more than their constituents—they become for the sacramentally sanctified person an 'outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace'. The *saṁskāras* serve further as a mean between the ascetic and the materialistic conception of life. The advocates of the ascetic ideal try to worship the Spirit ignoring the urge and significance of the body. The upholders of materialism do not go beyond the body and deny the spiritual aspect of life; they are deprived of the peace and joy of the Spirit. It is the aim of the *saṁskāras* to make the body a valuable possession, a thing not to be discarded, but made holy and sanctified, so that it might become a fitting instrument of the intelligent Spirit residing in it.

THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE SAṀSKĀRAS

The *saṁskāras* embrace various elements, and express the beliefs, sentiments, and knowledge the Hindus had about the nature of the universe, of human life, and man's relation to the superhuman powers believed to guide or control his destiny. The first and most important requirement of the sacrament is the sacred fire invariably kindled in the beginning of every rite. The family hearth is the first and holy of holies. The sacred fire that is kept burning in every house becomes the perpetual sign of all the influences that bind men to the family and enter into his social relations. Agni (fire) is regarded as the house lord, protector, high priest, mediator, and messenger between the gods and men.[20]

Prayers, appeals, and blessings are also constituents of the *saṁskāras*. Prayer results from the soul's sincere desire, felt or uttered, and it is in the form of an address by a personal Spirit to a personal Spirit. Those who are at the lowest level seek through prayers domestic felicity. But gradually, prayers raise all those who resort to them in virtue and protect them from vices, and they in turn become instruments of morality.[21] Prayers are also offered for the attainment of intellectual stimulation, purity, and communion with the deity. Blessings in the form of wishes and appeals are

[19] *Saṁskāraiḥ saṁskṛtaḥ pūrvaiḥ uttaraiścāpi saṁskṛtaḥ ;*
Nityam aṣṭaguṇair yukto brāhmaṇo brāhma-laukikaḥ.
Purified by the former *saṁskāras* (*garbhādhāna* etc.) and the latter (*agnyadhāna* etc.), and always practising the eight virtues of the soul, a Brāhmaṇa renders himself fit to attain to the world of Brahmā.—*Śaṅkha-Likhita*, quoted in the *Vīramitrodaya*, Chaukhamba Ed., I. p. 140.

[20] Cf. *Ṛ. V.*, I. 1. 1.

[21] Cf. *Ṛ. V.*, I. 189. 1.

expressed, when a person undergoes the *saṁskāras*, by those interested in him, and it is also believed that they will benefit the person who prays. Another important constituent of the *saṁskāras* is sacrifice. The belief is that the gods also, like men, are propitiated by praise and prayer; man naturally thinks that the gods accept presents and gifts like men. The recipient of a *saṁskāra*, or his agent, offers presents and pays homage, or tribute, to the beneficient gods either as a token of gratitude or in anticipation of further benefits. But above all, the sacrifice is the symbol of a universal law which requires complete dedication of the person before any act of creation or consummation. This spiritual significance of the sacrifice is the underlying principle of the *saṁskāras*.

Bath, sipping of water, lustration, and baptismal sprinkling with water are used as purificatory media in the performance of the *saṁskāras*. Bath is regarded as the complete washing off of physical, moral, and spiritual impurities. Sipping of water and lustration are partial or symbolic baths. Ceremonial purification is a universal feature in almost all the *saṁskāras*.[23] Orientation is another element of the sacrament; it is based on the picturesque symbolism of the path of the sun and also on the myth that different directions are associated with different effects. The eastern direction is associated with light, warmth, life, happiness, and glory. The western direction is associated with darkness, chill, death, and decay. According to Indian mythology the northern direction is associated with Soma (Moon) symbolizing peace, gentleness, and agreeableness; and the southern direction with Yama, the god of death. The recipient of a *saṁskāra* has to face the direction appropriate to the occasion.

At various stages of the *saṁskāras* many taboos are observed—taboos connected with articles of food, with lucky and unlucky days, months, and years. Magical elements are also found mixed with the *saṁskāras*. In early times the ethical conception of man was influenced by the magical determination of things injurious. It is things thus determined to be injurious that were placed under taboo and carefully avoided. The Hindus accept the existence of supernatural powers associated with the dangers and problems of life, confronted them frequently and demanded vigilence, investigation, and prompt action. The supernatural powers had to be controlled or made use of by directive or coercive procedure. The term *magic* is applied to this tendency of man to control those powers. Magic operates on the basis of sequence of incidents and imitation of nature and man. Pure religion, which is based on submission and

[23] *Tena māṁ abhisiñcāmi śrīyai yaśase brāhmaṇe brahmavarcasāya.—Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II. 6. 9.

obedience to the supernatural Powers, is to be differentiated from magic. Divination also plays an important part in the performance of the *saṁskāras*. By divination people seek to discover the will of supernatural Powers, desire to know the causes of their past and present misfortunes, and what will happen in the future, so that they may determine at any moment what will be the best way to follow. It is believed that natural phenomena indicate the purpose of the superhuman forces. Of all divinatory methods, astrology is of the greatest service to the *saṁskāras*. The splendour and myths of the sidereal heavens, and the belief that the heavenly bodies are either divine or controlled by divine beings, and that they are the abode of the dead gave great importance to astrology. The movements of the stars were looked upon as signs indicating the will of the gods.

Symbolism is another constituent of the *saṁskāras*. A symbol is a material object or an apparent action adopted to convey a mental or spiritual significance. Analogous objects or imitative behaviour stand as symbols, and it is believed that like things produce like effects. Psychologically, a symbol stimulates the human mind in the right direction for the achievement of an object in view, or an ideal to be approximated or realized. The *saṁskāras* are full of apt symbols, which present concrete and idyllic pictures of ideas to be understood and the ideal to be reached. In addition to the above constituents, the *saṁskāras* include social customs and usages and rules about eugenics, ethics, hygiene, and medicine. In religion the different aspects of life are not departmentalized. The whole life is a compact unity saturated with an all-pervading idea of a spiritual experience. As the influence of the *saṁskāras* covered the whole life of an individual, his physical, mental, and spiritual training was combined to create for the Hindu a sacramental atmosphere fragrant with spiritual significance.

THE PRE-NATAL SAṀSKĀRAS

A brief description of the *saṁskāras* is given below in the order they are enlisted above. The institutors of the *saṁskāras* took a very comprehensive view of life. The life of a person does not start with his birth ; it goes farther back, as it is conditioned by parentage, heredity, and environment. Its reformation must therefore start with conception. The very first sacrament therefore is known as *garbhādhāna*, which word literally means placing the seed in the womb. According to Hinduism procreation is not to be looked upon as a biological phenomenon only common to all animals, but it should be seen in a socio-ethical context. It is a sacred duty of the married couple to approach each other in the proper time for the sake of progeny, so that the race might continue. Procreation of children was

regarded as necessary for paying off the debts to the forefathers,[23] and failure to comply with the injunction of the scripture in this regard was considered a sin. Fulfillment of this sacred duty, however, entailed physical fitness and psychological willingness of the couple, selection of a suitable time, proper regard to the eligibility of the parents, and the sense of their duty to the race. This *saṁskāra* is therefore very important from the cultural point of view. We do not find here the primitive man expressing his wonder at the prospect of begetting a child, but a purposive man approaching his wife in an attitude of religious serenity—which, he believes, will consecrate the expected child—with the blessed intention of having progeny.

After the conception is ascertained, the child in the womb is consecrated by the second *saṁskāra* called *puṁsavana*. It was thought necessary that through the treatment of the pregnant mother the child in the womb should be influenced; and so medical and mental treatment of the mother was prescribed. *Puṁsavana* is performed in the third or fourth month of pregnancy or even later on a day when the moon is in a male constellation, particularly the *tiṣya-nakṣatra*. The mother is required to fast on the day, and in the night the sprouts of the banyan tree are pounded, and the juice is dropped into her right nostril with the verses beginning with, '*Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ*' etc. The significance of the *saṁskāra* consists in this: The conjunction of the moon with a male constellation is symbolic of a male or virile child; hence the term literally means 'male procreation through the stimulation of the foetus. The giving of the juice of the banyan is a device or a symbolic treatment to nourish the child properly; this practice has a medical basis; Suśruta says: 'Having pounded with milk any of these herbs, *vaṭa-śuṅga, sahadevī*, and *viśvadeva*, one should pass three or four drops of it into the right nostril of the pregnant woman for the birth of a son. She should not spit the juice out.'[24]

The third sacrament is called *sīmantonnayana*, in which the hairs of a pregnant woman are ceremoniously parted. The purpose of this *saṁskāra* is symbolic as well as practical. When a woman is in her pregnancy, it is believed, she is attacked by evil spirits, and for her protection proper rites should be performed. The religious intention behind the performance of the *saṁskāra* is to bring prosperity to the mother and long life to the unborn child. The physiological knowledge of the Hindus was also responsible for instituting this *saṁskāra*. From the fifth month of pregnancy the mental formation of the child starts.[25] So the pregnant woman is required to take

[23] *Jāyamāno vai brāhmaṇas-tribhir-ṛṇvā jāyate; brahmacaryeṇa ṛṣibhyo, yajñena devebhyaḥ, prajayā pitṛbhayaḥ; eṣa vā anṛṇo yaḥ putri yajva brahmacāri vāsi.*—*Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, VI. 3. 10. 5.

[24] *Suśruta, Śarīra-sthāna*, Ch. II.

[25] *Pañcame manaḥ prabuddhataraṁ bhavati, ṣaṣṭhe buddhiḥ. Suśruta, Śarīra-sthāna*, Ch XXXIII.

the utmost care to facilitate it by avoiding physical or mental shock to the foetus. In order to keep her in good cheer, she is addressed as *rākā* (full moon) and *supeśā* (of beautiful limbs). With caressing attention the husband himself parts the hairs of the pregnant wife, and after that he ties the *udumbara* (fig tree) branch round her neck with the words, 'Rich in sap is this tree ; like the tree rich in sap, be thou fruitful'.[26] Then the following words of blessings are uttered, 'Be the mother of heroic sons ; be the mother of living sons ; etc.' Under this *saṁskāra* detailed rules of eugenics and hygiene are prescribed for the pregnant woman and her husband. One of these rules relates to *daurhṛda* or *dohada*, which means fulfilling the wishes of the pregnant wife.[27] After the sixth month of pregnancy, the husband should avoid tonsure, coition, and the performance of *śrāddha* (memorial rites). The wife is advised that from the time of pregnancy she should avoid coition, over-exertion, sleeping in the day, keeping awake in the night, mounting a carriage, all the sources of fear, sitting like a cock, purgative, phlebotomy, and retention of excretion, urine, etc.[28] These rules make it clear that according to these ancient authorities every possible care had to be taken to preserve the health of the pregnant woman and the unborn child.

THE SAṀSKĀRAS OF CHILDHOOD

The second phase in the life of the child starts when it is delivered by the mother, and assumes an independent existence. This occasion is celebrated, and the newborn is consecrated with apt ceremonies. There are a number of accessory rites performed for the safety of the child and the mother. A day or two before delivery the expectant mother enters the well-protected *sūtikā-gṛha*, the lying-in chamber. A number of medical and psychological precautions are taken. Before the *jātakarman* proper, a ceremony named *soṣyantī-karman* is performed to expedite the delivery of the child, and in this rite some *Atharvan* hymns are recited.

The *jātakarman* ceremony is made up of several items and is generally performed before the severing of the navel string. The first item is *medhājanana* (the generation of talent),[29] which is performed repeating the formula, '*Bhūs tvayi dadhāmi, bhuvas tvayi dadhāmi, bhūr bhuvaḥ svas tvayi dadhāmi*' (*bhūḥ* (the earth) I place in thee ; *bhuvaḥ* (the sky) I place in thee ; *svaḥ* (heaven) I place in thee). The above formulas are repeated while the child is fed with ghee and honey with a thin gold strip—these substances are symbolic of strength and intelligence.[30] This speaks for

[26] *Ayaṁ ūrjāvato vṛkṣaḥ urjīva phalinī bhava.*—*Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 15. 6.
[27] *Yāj. Sm.*, III. 79.
[28] *Suśruta, Śarīra-sthāna*, Ch. II.
[29] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 16.
[30] *Suśruta, Śarīra-sthāna*, Ch. XLV.

the high concern of the Hindus for the intellectual well-being of the child, which they regarded as their first duty to the child. The second item is *āyuṣya* (longevity). All possible instance of long life, such as *ṛṣis* (seers), *pitṛs* (the manes), Agni (fire), and Soma (Moon) are cited before the child, and by this association of thought and through these utterances, it is believed that the life of the babe will be lengthened.[31] The third item relates to *śakti* (strength). The father dramatically tells the babe, 'Be a stone; be an axe; be an imperishable god. Thou indeed art the self called son; live thou a hundred years.'[32] The mother is congratulated by the husband with the words: 'Thou art like the admirable Arundhati, the wife of Vasiṣṭha. Through me who am a man, thou hast borne a son. Be thou blessed with many sons, thou, who hast blessed us with a son.'[33] Next the umbical cord is severed, and the child is washed and given an opportunity of sucking the breast of the mother. The birth of a child is regarded as the fruition of conjugal life, and it is a highly auspicious occasion because of its racial importance.

The name-giving ceremony, *nāmakaraṇa*, comes next. Ever since men evolved language, they gave names to persons and things. The Hindus very early realized the importance of naming persons and elevated the act to the position of a religious sacrament. The choice of a name for the child is often connected with religious ideas, though there are also other considerations. The child is frequently named after a god who is regarded as its protector; or it is named after a saint whose blessings are sought for it. Secular ideas too determine the names; a particular quality denoting a name is expected to be in the person so named. The adoption of the father's name is prevalent, which is based on family attachment and pride. Secret names are found being given; for the name involves the personality of a man, and is therefore withheld from enemies. The social status of a person is also a factor determining the choice of his name.[34] The surnames of the four *varṇas* are also to be different.[35]

The Gṛhya-Sūtras discuss the composition of the name. According to the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-Sūtra*,[36] the name should be of two or four syllables beginning with a sonant, with a semi-vowel in it, with a long vowel or with *visarga* at the end—a name formed from a root with a *kṛt* affix and not a nominal derivative formed with a *taddhita* affix. Other Gṛhya-Sūtras give varying suggestions. The name of a girl should contain an uneven number of syllables, it should end in *ā*, and should be a *taddhita*.[37] 'It should be

[31] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 16. 6.
[32] *Ibid.*, I. 16. 6.
[33] *Ibid.*, I. 16. 15.
[34] *Manu*, II. 31.
[35] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 17; *Baudhāyana Gṛ. S.*, I. 11. 10; *Yama* quoted by *Aparārka*, p. 27; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, III. 10. 9.
[36] I. 17. 1.
[37] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 17. 3.

easy to pronounce, not harsh to hear, clear in meaning, charming, auspicious, ending in a long vowel, and containing some blessings.'[38] She should not be given an awkward name indicating a constellation, a tree, a river, a mountain, a bird, a servant, and a terror.[39]

Fourfold naming is suggested—first, according to the constellation under which the child is born; secondly, according to the deity of the month; thirdly, according to the family deity; and fourthly, according to the popular calling. The selection of the last one depends on the culture and education of the family. It is desired to be auspicious and significant. But in the case of a child whose birth is belated, or who is born after the parents had sustained the loss of many children, an awkward or repulsive name is given in order to frighten away disease and death. *Nāmakaraṇa* is ordinarily performed on the tenth or twelfth day after the birth of the child.

Niṣkramaṇa is the name given to the taking of the child for the first time out of the house. Every important step in the life of a progressing child is a festive occasion for its parents and kinsmen, who celebrate it with appropriate religious ceremony. In the beginning the child is confined to the lying-in chamber and then to the house in which it is born. But within a month or two even the house is found to be too small a world for the growing child; the satisfaction of its curiosities and the movements of its limbs require a wider field, and so it is brought out to the world outside with the performance of *niṣkramaṇa*. Life outside the house, however, is not free from natural and supernatural dangers. Therefore a number of precautionary measures, physical and religious, are adopted to ensure the safety of the child. On the day of the *niṣkramaṇa*, a square area in the courtyard from where sun can be seen is plastered with cow dung and clay, the sign of a *svastika* is marked on it, and over it grains of rice are scattered by the mother. The child is brought out by a nurse, and the ceremony ends when the father makes the child look at the sun[40] with the sound of conch-shell and the chanting of Vedic hymns. The sacrament is significant, as it recognizes a vital need of the growing child brought face to face with the sublime splendour of the universe.

Annaprāśana is the first feeding of the child with solid food; it is primarily connected with the physical necessity of the child. This fact is endorsed by Suśruta,[41] who prescribes the weaning of the child in the sixth month and feeding it with the type of food suitable to growth. Food sustains life; but it is believed that there is something mysterious or spiritual

[38] *Manu*, II. 33. [39] *Ibid.*, III. 9.

[40] According to Yama, quoted in *Vīramitrodaya*, I. p. 250, a child should see the sun in the third and the moon in the fourth month after its birth.

[41] *Ṣaṇmāsaṁ caivaṁ annaṁ prāśayet laghu hitaṁ ca*, Ch. X. 64.

about it, and that life emanated from it.[42] On the day of the feeding ceremony, the sacramental food is prepared out of cleaned materials, while muttering appropriate Vedic hymns. Different types of food are prescribed for different results intended for the child. Honey and butter in a golden pot are suggested by some authorities. One oblation is offered to Speech (Vāc), another to Vigour (Ūrjā or Ojas). Further, four oblations are offered with these words: *Prāṇenānnaṁ aśīya svāhā, apānenānnaṁ aśīya svāhā, cakṣuṣā rūpāṇyāśīya svāhā, śrotreṇa yaśośīya svāhā* (With up-breathing may I enjoy food, *svāhā!* With down-breathing may I enjoy food, *svāhā!* With the eyes may I enjoy visible things, *svāhā!* With the ears may I enjoy fame, *svāhā!*).[43] Here the word 'food' is used in a wide sense. The significance of this sacrament is that it marks the weaning of the child from the mother at the proper time, that it impresses the need of food suitable for the age, and that it imparts to the child a sense of the sanctity of food.

Cūḍākaraṇa (tonsure) is the eighth *saṁskāra*, the purpose of which is the achievement of long life and beauty for its recipient.[44] Life is prolonged by tonsure and shortened without it; therefore it should be performed by all means.[45] That tonsure conduces to long life and beauty is endorsed by Suśruta, who states that shaving and cutting the hair and nails remove impurities and give delight, lightness, prosperity, courage, and happiness,[46] and by Caraka, who opines that cutting and dressing the hair, beard, and nails give strength, vigour, life, purity, and beauty.[47] It is the opinion of some anthropologists that this ceremony had originally a dedicative purpose: that is, hair was cut off and offered to a deity as a gift;[48] but this dedicative purpose is unknown to the Gṛhya-Sūtras and the Smṛtis. No doubt, the sacrament is sometimes performed in the temple of a deity; this, however, is done only in the case of those children who are born either after long disappointment or after the death of previous children. As a rule, there is no connection between tonsure and the dedication of the shaved hair to a deity.

According to the Gṛhya-Sūtras, the *cūḍākaraṇa* ceremony should take place at the end of the first year or before the expiry of the third year, though later authorities extend the age to the seventh year. The most distinguishing feature of this sacrament is the arrangement of the hair tuft

[42] *Y. V.*, XVII. 33; *Tai. U.*, III. 7. 9. [43] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, I. 19. 3.

[44] *Yena dhātā bṛhaspater agner indrasya cāyuṣe 'vapat; tena te āyuṣe vapāmi suślokāya svastaye.—Āśvalāyana Gṛ. S.*, I. 17. 12.

[45] *Vasiṣṭha*, quoted in the *Vīramitrodaya*, I. p. 296.

[46] *Pāpopaśamanaṁ keśa-nakha-roma-parimārjanam,*
Harṣa-lāghava-saubhāgya-karam utsāha-vardhanam.
—*Cikitsā-sthāna*, Ch. XXIV. 72.

[47] *Pauṣṭikaṁ vṛṣyam āyuṣyaṁ sucirūpam virājanam.*
Keśa-śmaśru-nakhādināṁ kartanam samprasādhanam.

[48] Crawford Howell Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*, p. 81.

(*śikhā* or *cūḍā*), as the very name of the *saṁskāra* suggests. The vital connection between *śikhā* and life is thus explained by Suśruta: 'Inside the head, near the top, is the joint of a *śirā* (artery) and a *sandhi* (critical juncture). There, in the eddy of hairs, is the vital spot called *adhipati* (overlord). Any injury to this part causes sudden death.'[49] In course of time, *śikhā* developed as a universal symbol of Hinduism, and its removal came to be regarded as a grave sin.[50]

Karṇavedha is the sacrament connected with the boring of the ear, performed between the first and the fourth year of the child. Boring of the limbs for wearing ornaments is a practice current among various peoples all over the world. Throughout the history of civilization, the love of ornamentation has continued. The boring of the ears is a custom undoubtedly ornamental in its origin ; but later on it was believed also to be useful from the point of view of health, and in order to emphasize this importance it might have been given a religious sanction. Suśruta says that the ears of a child are to be bored for protection and decoration.[51] The same authority explicitly prescribes the boring of the ears for preventing hydrocele and hernia.[52] The type of needle—gold for Kṣatriya, silver for Brāhmaṇa and Vaiśya—with which the ears are to be bored is also prescribed. The *Vīramitrodaya* quotes Bṛhaspati to this effect: A gold needle lends elegance, but those who have no means to have it may use a silver or an iron needle. When *karṇavedha* assumed a religious importance, it became compulsory like the keeping of the *śikhā*. Devala, a mediaeval Smṛti writer, warns that all accumulated merits would disappear at the sight of a Brāhmaṇa through whose ear-holes the rays of the sun do not pass.

EDUCATIONAL SAṀSKĀRAS

Vidyārambha is the tenth sacrament, and it marks the beginning of study, or the learning of the alphabet. When the mind of the child has developed and become ready to receive education, the first thing that is to be done is to teach it the alphabet—to handle the most advanced medium of education. The alphabet is regarded as the route to all knowledge, just as rivers lead to the ocean. 'By the proper mastery of the alphabet he entered the wide domain of literature (*vāṅmaya*), as one reaches the ocean through the mouth of the river.'[53] This sacrament is also known as

[49] *Śarīra-sthāna*, Ch. VI. 83.
[50] *Laghu-Hārita*, IV.
[51] *Rakṣā-vibhūṣaṇa-nimittaṁ bālasya karṇau vidhyāt.—Śarīra-sthāna*, XVI. 1.
[52] *Śaṅkhopari ca kartante tyaktvā yatnena sīvanīṁ ;*
Vyatyāsād vā śirāṁ vidhyed antārvṛddhi nivṛttaye.
—Cikitsā-sthāna, XIX. 21.
[53] *Liber yathāvad grahaṇena vāṅmayaṁ*
Nadī-mukhenaiva samudram āviśat.—Raghuvaṁśa, III. 28.

vidyārambha, akṣarārambha, and *akṣaralekhana* ; and these names suggest that it must have originated at an advanced stage of culture, when alphabet was evolved and used for literary purposes. It was perhaps historical in origin, as it is mentioned only in later literature. This *saṁskāra* is performed in the fifth year of the child ; but according to Viśvāmitra, it may be extended up to the seventh. Some authorities prescribe that it should take place just after the *cūḍākaraṇa*.[54] When the sun is in the northern hemisphere, an auspicious day is to be fixed for its performance. It is prohibited during the rainy season, when Viṣṇu, denoting also the sun, who gives light, is supposed to be asleep.

Upanayana, or the sacrament of initiation, stands for taking the child to a teacher for education. From the cultural point of view it is the most important sacrament. *Vidyārambha* may be regarded as the beginning of primary education: *upanayana* marks the beginning of secondary education.. From the sacramental point of view it may be compared with the 'initiation ceremony' met with in various cultures, which seeks to introduce the youth to the privileges of the communal life ; and so it is as important as any similar class of social procedure the object of which is to prepare the initiate for the active duties of a citizen. The initiate is trained in communal discipline and racial culture, and a knowledge of traditional and current subject is imparted to him. The Hindu ideal of *upanayana* has made universal education the indispensable test and insignia of the race. It is a great advance over the primitive types of initiation like endurance test, temporary seclusion, or mutilation of the body, still current among many religious communities. The most striking feature of the *upanayana* lies in the belief that by its performance the initiate is given a cultural and spiritual rebirth.[55] The physical birth of a child is crude, as it is associated with animality ; but rebirth through discipline and learning is considered exalted and holy.[56]

The meaning and purpose of the *upanayana* have changed in the course of time. In the *Atharva-Veda* the term *upanayana* is used in the sense of 'taking charge of a student',[57] while later it meant the initiation of a child by a teacher into sacred lore. It had the Vedic connotation in the Brāhmaṇa and the Sūtra periods also ; but when its mystic significance increased, the idea of the second birth through religious ceremonies overshadowed the original idea of initiation for education. Thus originally, education was the main purpose of this *saṁskāra*, and ritual was an ancillary item. But

[54] *Kṛta-caula-karmā lipi-saṁkhyānam ca upayuñjīta.—Arthaśāstra,* I. 5.
[55] *Manu*, II. 146-48.
[56] *Vās. Dh. S.*, II. 3-5 ; *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 1. 1. 13-17.
[57] *Ācārya upanayamāno brahmacāriṇaṁ kurute garbham antaḥ* (the teacher, taking him in charge, makes the student an embryo within). XI. 5. 3.

in course of time the performance of the ritual, and the *vratādeśa* or the undertaking of the vow became the chief object and education but secondary.

The first thing connected with this sacrament that now comes up for discussion is the age of the recipient; and it is decided on the basis of the social status and the professional requirements of the child. A Brāhmaṇa is to be initiated at the age of eight, a Kṣatriya at eleven, and a Vaiśya at twelve. In the case of promising and ambitious children initiation may be given earlier. A Brāhmaṇa has to spend the longest period in studentship, as he has to master, and specialize in, the Vedic lore, which the other *varṇas* (castes) are not expected to do. The last permitted limit of age for the performance of the *upanayana* of a Brāhmaṇa is sixteen, of a Kṣatriya twenty-two, and of a Vaiśya twenty-four. 'If after the above limit people remained uninitiated, they became *vrātyas*, fallen from *sāvitrī* (the sacred hymns), and discarded by the Aryans.'[58] They are, however, readmitted into the Aryan community after performance of the *vrātyā-stoma* sacrifice. Thus the rule regarding the *upanayana* was strictly observed even at the penalty of excommunication from the society.

The second matter to be considered at the time of the *upanayana* is the selection of a proper teacher. The main object of this sacrament being the acquisition of knowledge and the building of character, if the teacher himself lacks in knowledge and virtue, he cannot shape the life of his students and elevate them. 'From darkness to darkness he goes, when an ignorant person initiates. Therefore one should desire an initiator who comes of a good family, is learned, and is self-controlled.'[59] Long lists enumerating the qualifications of an ideal teacher are found in the scriptures. 'A Brāhmaṇa who is well-read, of good family, of good character, and purified by penance, should initiate a child.'[60] 'One should not engage for a sacrifice a person who is not steady in his character, nor should one select him as a teacher, as hands besmeared with fat cannot be cleaned with blood.'[61] 'An *āchārya* (teacher) should be truthful, talented, capable, merciful towards all creatures, faithful, given to Vedic studies, pure, etc.'[62] The *upanayana*, further, must be performed in a specified season. 'A Brāhmaṇa is initiated in the spring, a Rājanya (Kṣhatriya) in summer, a Vaiśya in autumn, and a Rathakāra (chariot maker) during the rainy season.'[63] This choice of a season according to the *varṇa* has reference to temperament: the three seasons and the three *varṇas* are respectively calm, hot, and pliable.

[58] *Manu*, II. 39.
[59] *Tamaso vā eṣa tamaḥ praviśati yam avidvān upanayate, yaścāvidvān iti hi brāhmaṇaṁ, tasmin abhijana vidyā samuditaṁ saṁskartāraṁ īpset.* Quoted in *Vīramitrodaya*, I. p. 408.
[60] *Śaunaka*, *ibid.*, p. 408.
[61] *Hārita*, *ibid.*, p. 409.
[62] *Yama*, *ibid.*, p. 408.
[63] *Baudhāyana Gṛ. S.*, II. 5. 6.

The next item to be observed is the last meal with the mother, which marks the end of childhood and the beginning of a career outside the home. In connection with this sacrament the initiate has to undergo a bath which symbolizes the ceremonious purification of the body and the mind before he can enter the domain of *brahmacarya* which is regarded as a prolonged sacrifice. Then a *kaupīna* (loin-cloth) is offered to him to cover his privy parts. Social consciousness has already dawned upon the boy; so from now onward he is particularly instructed to observe social decorum and to maintain his own dignity and self-control. *Mekhalā* (girdle) is another equipment given to the initiate, and it is tied repeating a verse which has this meaning: 'A daughter of faith, a sister of the sages, possessed of austerity, beneficent to all creatures.'[64] 'Protector of moral order, observer of *tapas* (austerity), destroyer of evils, etc.'[65] The girdle was originally meant to support the loin-cloth, but later on it was turned into a religious symbol suggesting moral purity and preparedness for the vigorous duties of an austere student. Investiture of the student with *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread) has become, in course of time, the most important item of this sacrament. The teacher performs this ceremony with an appropriate *mantra*, asking for the recipient's long life, purity, strength, and illumination, while the latter remains looking towards the sun.[66] The constant wearing of the *yajñopavīta* suggests that the life of the twice-born is a continuous sacrifice necessitated by the socio-religious duties. Similarly, *ajina* (deer skin) and *daṇḍa* (staff) are also presented to the student, who has to lead a strict life of discipline almost like an ascetic.

The items that follow are of psychological and educational importance: *sūrya-darśana* (looking at the sun)—this indicates the need of constant exertion and watchfulness on the part of the celibate student, who turns to the sun as to a perpetual witness; *hṛdaya-sparśa* (touching the heart) symbolizes the mental and emotional communion between the teacher and the taught; *aśmārohaṇa* (climbing the stone) suggests the need for steadfastness in studies and character; *hasta-grahaṇa* (taking by the hand) as the teacher's charge is quite significant. The teacher asks: Whose pupil art thou? The student answers: Yours. The teacher corrects: Indra's pupil art thou; Agni (fire) is thy teacher: I am thy teacher N. N.[67] After taking charge of the student, the teacher delivers the following

[64] *Śraddhāyāḥ duhitā tapaso 'dhijātā svasā ṛṣīṇāṁ bhūta-kṛtā babhūva.*—*A. V.*, VI. 133. 4.

[65] *Vasiṣṭha Gṛ. S.*, V.

[66] *Yajñopavītaṁ paramaṁ pavitraṁ prajāpater yat sahajaṁ purastāt,*
Āyuṣyaṁ agryaṁ pratimuñca śubhraṁ yajñopavītaṁ balaṁ astu tejaḥ.
—*Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II. 2. 13.

[67] *Mama vrate te hṛdayaṁ dadhāmi, mama cittam anu cittam te 'stu, mama vācam eka manā juṣasva, bṛhaspatistvā niyunaktu mahyam.*
—*Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II. 2. 18.

commandment: 'A student art thou; drink water; do thy work; do not sleep during day-time; keep silence; be obedient to the teacher and study the Vedas; fetch alms morning and evening; morning and evening put fuel into the fire; observe *brahmacarya* (continence) for twelve years or till the Vedas are learned.' The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* explains: 'Sip water. Water doubtless means ambrosia; "sip ambrosia" is thus what he means. Do thy work. Work doubtless means vigour; "exert vigour" is what he tells him. Put fuel into the fire. "Enkindle thy mind with fire, with holy lustre" that is what he thereby tells him. Do not sleep. "Do not die" that is what he thereby says to him.'[68] After this the most sacred *sāvitrī-mantra* is taught to the student, which means: 'Let us meditate on the most excellent light of Savitṛ, the Creator. May He stimulate our intellect.'[69] Such a prayer is particularly apt for a celibate student seeking intellectual development in the proper direction. After this the student enkindles the sacred fire, the symbol of warmth, austerity, exertion, and brilliance. Lastly, he takes a round for alms; this is an act that indicates his dependence on society, whose debts he has to discharge throughout his life.

The sacrament of *upanayana* performed at the beginning of study marks the dawn of a new life. The student is now an *upanīta*—one who is introduced to a life of perfect discipline. The sacrament symbolizes the student's entering the boundless realm of knowledge, it marks for him his destination, it asks him to be vigilant and steadfast in his path, and it reminds him of the need of complete harmony between him and his teacher. In his venture, the student is assured of the help of society, of all living creatures, and of the invisible powers. Bṛhaspati (the lord of knowledge), Indra (the lord of power), and Agni (the source of brilliance and energy) are held before him as his ideals. If a student acts in the manner suggested by the symbolism of this sacrament, he is bound to be a successful scholar and a full-fledged citizen fit to share the responsibility of the world.

Vedārambha (beginning of Vedic study) forms the thirteenth *saṁskāra* in the list. This sacrament as also the next one are not mentioned in the earliest lists of the *saṁskāras* preserved in the Dharma-Sūtras, in which we have four Vedic vows (*catvāri veda-vratāni*) instead. It seems that though the *upanayana* marked the beginning of secondary education, it did not synchronize with Vedic study, when the non-Vedic studies grew in extent. Therefore a separate *saṁskāra* was felt necessary to initiate Vedic study independently; the *vedārambha-saṁskāra* thus came into existence. Every student has to master his own branch of the Vedas as settled by his parentage, and in consequence this sacrament is performed differently in

[68] XI. 5. 4.
[69] *Tatsavitur-vareṇyaṁ, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.*

the case of different types of students. Its significance lies in the fact that it still emphasizes the predominance of the Vedas in the curriculum of studies.[70]

The *keśānta*, as the name suggests, is a sacrament connected with the first shaving of the student's beard, when his age is about sixteen years. As the consciousness of manhood dawns upon him, he is required to exercise greater watchfulness over his youthful impulses; and so by this sacrament he is once more reminded of his vows of *brahmacarya*. The procedure of this sacrament is almost the same as that of the *cūḍākaraṇa*. *Keśānta* was also called *godāna* (the gift of a cow), the reason being that at the end of the ceremony the student offered a cow to the teacher.[71]

Samāvartana is the sacrament performed when the student returns from the home of the preceptor after completing the studies. It is also called *snāna* (bath). The period of *brahmacarya* being regarded as a great sacrifice,[72] an *avabhṛtha snāna* or ritual bath is taken, as it is customary on the completion of all sacrifices. Figuratively, an erudite scholar is called a *niṣṇāta* or *snāta*, because he is considered to have crossed the ocean of learning and discipline. There were three types of *snātakas* or 'graduates': *vidyā-snātaka* (versed in learning), *vrata-snātaka* (proficient in discipline), and *ubhaya-snātaka* (distinguished in both).[73] Completion of learning and return home is a very momentous event in a student's life, because he is either prepared to marry and plunge into the busy life of the world, or he has acquired the Vedic knowledge that may give him the power to keep off from the turmoil of the world in order to lead a life of physical and mental detachment. Those students who choose the first path are called *upakurvāṇa*, that is, who honour the preceptor by gifts on their leaving his residence to enter the married life; and those pupils who choose the second path are known as *naiṣṭhika*,[74] that is, who dedicate themselves to lifelong studentship [and who continue as *brahmacārins*] remaining in the preceptor's home. The majority of students follow the first course and a few the second. In every case the permission (*anujñā*) of the teacher is regarded as necessary; it is a kind of certificate proving the eligibility of the student who has completed the course either to marry or to remain a *naiṣṭhika*. The permission is preceded by the students' giving the *guru-dakṣiṇā*, the proper fee to the preceptor.[75] The student does not pay

[70] See *Āśvalāyana Gṛ. S.*, quoted in the *Saṁskāra mayūkha*, p. 64; *Garga-Paddhati*.

[71] See *Āśvalāyana Gṛ. S.*, I. 18.

[72] *Dīrgha-satraṁ va eṣa upaiti yo brahmacaryam-upaiti*. Quoted by Gadādhara on *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II. 2. 15.

[73] *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.*, II. 5. 32-36.

[74] *Yāj.*, I. 49.

[75] *Vidyānte guruṁ arthena nimantrya kṛtānujñanasya snānaṁ iti*. *Āśvalāyana Gṛ. S.*, III. 8; *Manu*, III. 4.

anything to the *ācārya* except service till the study is complete; but when he leaves, it is expected that he should honour him with an acceptable fee according to his means, even though the services rendered by him have been valued highly. According to the ancient texts, 'Even the earth with its seven continents is not sufficient for the *guru-dakṣiṇā*'.[76] Even though a student is not able to pay the teacher anything material, he should at least go to him for his permission. The latter would gladly say, 'My child, never mind about money, I am satisfied with thy merits',[77] and would instruct him with impressive words, of which we have a memorable example in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I. 11.

The ceremonies connected with *samāvartana* mainly consist of two items: (1) shutting the *snātaka* in a room in the morning, and (2) his undergoing the formal bath. The first item is symbolic of the *snātaka*'s splendour. According to the *Bhāradvāja Gṛhya-Sūtra*,[78] the first act is done, so that the sun may not be insulted by the superior lustre of the *snātaka*, with whose borrowed light he shines. The formal bath symbolizes: (1) washing away the divinity or superhuman influence, lest it be defiled by worldly contact, (2) cooling down the heat of the ascetic celibate student life, and (3) crossing the ocean of learning. The *snātaka*, after taking his bath, puts off the meagre ascetic insignia of a student, and accepts the comforts of life which were denied to him previously. Dressed in his new attire, he proceeds in a chariot, or on an elephant, to the nearest assembly of the learned, to which he is introduced as a competent scholar by his teacher, and which recognizes his merits and learning, so that he comes out as a worthy scholar.

MARRIAGE

Of all the Hindu sacraments, *vivāha*, marriage, is the most central one. The Gṛhya-Sūtras generally describe the *saṁskāras* as beginning with it, because it is the source of all domestic sacrifices and ceremonies, and also because in the view of the writer of these Sūtras, every man normally would marry and run a home. Manu enjoins: 'Having spent the first quarter of one's life in the house of one's *guru*, the second quarter in one's own house with the wife, and the third quarter in the forest, one should take *sannyāsa* in the fourth quarter, casting away every worldly tie.'[79] Classical Hinduism does not encourage premature retirement or asceticism; it emphasizes the importance of the life of the householder.

[76] *Tāpanīya-śruti*, quoted in *Vīramitrodaya*, I. p. 565; Cf. *Chā. U.*, III. 11. 6.
[77] *Alàmarthena me vatsa tvadguṇair asmi toṣitaḥ*, *Saṁgraha*, quoted in *ibid.*
[78] II. 1. 8.
[79] *Manu*, IV. 1.

Manu thus extols the householder: Just as every creature lives by air, so the orders of life exist by the support of the householder;[80] a wife is the main source of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, and so an unmarried person, irrespective of the *varṇa* (caste) to which he belongs, is unfit for the discharge of his duties.[81] The sacrament of marriage impresses upon a person that earthly life is not to be despised; rather, it should be consciously accepted and elevated to the level of a spiritual experience.

The eight forms of marriage mentioned in the Smṛti[82] are *paiśāca*, *rākṣasa*, *gāndharva*, *āsura*, *prājāpatya*, *ārṣa*, *daiva*, and *brāhma*, listed in an ascending order of merit; and these may be viewed as fraudulent, forcible, romantic, commercial, racial, austere, sacrificial, and spiritual marriage respectively. The last four are approved religiously (*praśasta*), but the first four are not (*apraśasta*). In the case of the approved marriages, the sacrament is a condition precedent, while in the case of the unapproved ones, it may be performed after the marriage on the basis of non-religious considerations. The sacrament, however, attempts to bless and consecrate every possible form of human union. Nuptial ceremonies are supposed to impart sanctity to the marital relation.[83]

First of all, the determination and selection of the couple control and shape the institution of sacramental marriage. Normally, a person should marry in the same *varṇa*[84] but outside the same *gotra* (clan), and *piṇḍa* (consanguinity).[85] *Anuloma* marriage (in which the wife is of an inferior caste) was permitted but not encouraged; *pratiloma* marriage (in which the husband is of an inferior caste), though tolerated early, was later on discouraged and banned.[86] Restrictions regarding *sagotra* and *sapiṇḍa* marriages have been invariably observed; their breach is regarded as incest and is legally forbidden. In the selection of the bride and the bridegroom their family, age, traits of body, learning, wealth, and resourcefulness are considered. The examination of the bride and the bridegroom is a regular item in the negotiation for marriages, as that helps the preservation of racial and social types. The selective principles are of domestic and eugenic importance. A great stress is laid on biological, intellectual, and spiritual homogeneity between the bride and the bridegroom.

A marriage sacrament consists of items pertaining to the pre-marital, marital, and post-marital stages. The most important of these are:[87]

[80] *Yathā vāyuṁ samaśritya vartante sarvajantavaḥ,*
Tathā gṛhastham-āśritya vartante sarva-āśramaḥ.
—*Ibid.*, III. 77.

[81] *Yāj.*, I. 51.

[82] *Manu*, III. 21 ff.

[83] *Devala*, quoted in the *Vīramitrodaya*, I.

[84] *Manu*, III. 4.

[85] *Ibid.*, III. 5.

[86] *Ibid.*, III. 12-15.

[87] For fuller details see the *Pāraskara Gṛ. S.* and *Paddhatis* of Māṇḍalika and Gadādhara,

(1) *vāgdāna* (betrothal), (2) *vara-varaṇa* (formal acceptance of the bridegroom), (3) *kanyā-dāna* (gift of the bride to the bridegroom by the legitimate guardian), (4) *vivāha-homa* (marriage offerings), (5) *pāṇigrahaṇa* (clasping the hand), (6) *hṛdaya-sparśa* (touching the heart), (7) *saptapadī* (seven steps symbolic of prosperity and felicity), (8) *aśmārohaṇa* (mounting the stone, symbolic of stability), (9) *sūryāvalokana* (looking at the sun, as a witness to the sacrament), (10) *dhruva-darśana* (looking at the Pole Star, a symbol of constancy), (11) *trirātra-vrata* (three nights' continence), (12) *caturthī-karma* (fourth day ceremony or the formal unification of the couple).

The Hindu marriage which the nuptials symbolize is not a social contract in the modern sense of the term, but a religious institution, a sacrament. Besides the two parties to a marriage—the bride and the bridegroom—there is a third party, that is *dharma* or their joint religious duty as the married couple through which they are united. The marital union is effected not by the wife and the husband alone, but by society, the guardians, and the supernatural powers—the symbols of spirituality. Such a marriage is therefore regarded as indissoluble ;[88] and if any dispute arises between the wedded couple, it is the third party, namely *dharma*, that mediates and unites them. *Dharma* would not allow them to separate ; without it the conjugal life would lose its charm and stability.

Several symbolic acts constitute the marriage ceremony, commencing with the betrothal. The *vāgdāna* is a semi-legal and psychological engagement, which should materialize into actual marriage. The *vara-varaṇa* symbolizes that the bridegroom chosen is the best and the fittest of his sex. The bridegroom says, 'I am the highest one among my people, as is the sun among the shining ones'.[89] In the *kanyā-dāna* ceremony, the father or the guardian of the bride formally hands over the bride to the bridegroom with a declaration of purpose (*saṁkalpa*) calling to witness the sacred fire round which the pair takes the symbolic walk ; for the fire is the centre and the symbol of the union of the couple effected by the rite. The bridegroom accepts the bride as the wife formally by clasping her hand which suggests that he has accepted the responsibility of her companionship. 'I seize thy hand for the sake of happiness, that thou mayest live to an old age with me, thy husband . . . I am this, thou art that . . . . The *sāman* am I ; the *ṛc* thou ; the heaven I, the earth thou. Come, let us marry. . . .'[90] The act of *hṛdaya-sparśa* indicates a complete emotional harmony between the husband and the wife: 'Into my will I take thy heart ;

[88] 'Let mutual fidelity (between husband and wife) continue till death ; this in brief may be understood to be the highest *dharma* of man and woman.' *Manu*, IX. 101.

[89] *Pāraskara Gr. S.*, I. 3. 9.

[90] *Āśvalāyana Gr. S.*, I. 7. 3.

thy mind shall dwell in my mind; in my word thou shalt rejoice with all thy heart; may Prajāpati join thee to me.'[91] *Saptapadī* is the next rite. The husband asks the wife to take seven steps in the northern direction with the words, 'Step one for sap, two for juice, three for the prospering of wealth, four for comforts, five for cattle, six for the seasons. Friend! be with seven steps (united to me). So be thou devoted to me.'[92] This formula contains all the essentials of domestic felicity. That marriage is a permanent union and not a temporary contract is symbolized by the five items beginning with *aśmārohaṇa*,[93] noted above. The primary function of marriage is the continuity of the race through the procreation of children, and so the union of the pair should be fruitful.[94] The fact that marriage is not a licence for indulgence, but a human institution aiming at moderation in conjugal life is symbolized by the *trirātra-vrata* (three nights' continence) observed at the end of the nuptials.[95] Through utterances, promises, hopes, and fears this sacrament impresses upon the minds of the couple that marriage is an act of sacrifice in the interest of the community, and so its biological function should be elevated to a spiritual plane.

ANTYEṢṬI OR THE FUNERAL

The last sacrament in the life of a Hindu is the *antyeṣṭi*. A Hindu consecrates his entire life through the performance of various sacraments at suitable stages, and at his death the survivors consecrate the event by death rites for his future good and spiritual felicity. Though performed after a man's death, this *saṁskāra* is not the less important, because for a Hindu the value of the next world is higher than that of the present. 'It is well known that through the *saṁskāras* after birth one conquers the earth, and through the *saṁskāras* after death, the other world.'[96]

The horror of death, the consolation sought by the survivors, the acceptance of death by all as the natural end of existence on earth, the need of disposing of the dead—all these seem to have contributed to the evolution of the *saṁskāras*. Baudhāyana says: 'Death is inevitable in the case of a man who is born. Therefore one should not be happy at birth nor bemoan death. A creature comes from the unknown and goes to the unknown; so the wise regard birth and death as equal. Such being the fact, people give their dues to their mother, father, preceptor, wife, son, disciple, cousin, maternal uncle, agnates, and cognates, and consecrate their cremation with proper sacrament.'[97]

[91] *Pāraskara Gr. S.*, I. 8. 8.
[92] *Ibid.*, I. 8. 1.
[93] *Śāṅkhāyana Gr. S.*, I. 8. 19.
[94] *R. V.*, X. 85. 40-41; *Hiraṇyakeśi Gr. S.*, I. 6. 20.
[95] *Pāraskara Gr. S.*, I. 8. 21.
[96] *Baudhāyana-pitṛmedha-sūtras*, III. 1. 4.
[97] *Ibid.*, III. 2. 3.

The conception of life after death, the mixed feeling of dread and love for the dead, eagerness for an easy and peaceful passage from the world of the mortals to that of lasting happiness, ensuring for the departed a fit place in the company of the manes and the gods, and the motive of securing the final liberation of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths must have occasioned several items of the funeral ceremonies.

When the cult of the sacrifice was adopted by the Hindus, the idea of sending the dead to the world of the gods through the fire must have struck them ; for Fire was regarded by them as a messenger between men and the gods. The disposal of the dead by cremation was treated as a sacrifice and became the prevalent mode, though in special cases burial and water burial also were allowed. The whole life of a Hindu is looked upon as a continuous sacrifice, and death is celebrated as the last sacrificial act of his earthly existence. Death and the disposal of the dead fall under the following heads: (1) Approach of death: The person whose death is near bids farewell to his assembled relatives and the world ; alms and gifts are distributed for his future happiness. (2) Pre-disposal ceremony: Oblations are offered into the sacrificial fire maintained by him. It has become customary now to drop Gaṅgā water and *tulasī* leaves into the mouth of the dying. (3) The bier: A special oblong frame is prepared to remove the dead body to the place of cremation, and the body is formally laid on it with the words, 'Give up the clothes that you have hitherto worn ; remember the *iṣṭa* (sacrifices) and the *pūrta* (acts of public utility) you have performed . . . . (4) Removal of the corpse: In ancient times the bier was put on a bullock cart with the verse, 'I harness these two bullocks to the cart for the conveyance of your life so that you may repair to the region of Yama, to the place where the virtuous resort'. Now the bier is carried by men—the nearest relatives and friends of the deceased—as an act of honour to him. (5) The funeral procession: The chief mourner, usually the eldest son of the dead person, is followed by relatives and friends, as he proceeds to the place of cremation. (6) *Anustaraṇī* (the accompanying cow): She is believed to be helpful in crossing the ocean of mortality. She is given away as gift and let off. (7) The cremation—burning of the corpse: The preliminaries to it include *abhiṣeka* (washing the corpse) and the piling of the pyre. Next, fire is applied to the pyre with the Vedic hymns, 'Agni, consume not this body to cinders, nor give it pain nor scatter about its skin or limbs, O Jātavedas, when the body is fairly burnt, convey the Spirit to its ancestors.'[11] 'May the organ of vision proceed to the sun ; may the vital air merge in the atmosphere ; may thou

[11] *Ṛ. V.*, X. 16. 1.

proceed according to thy virtuous deeds to heaven or earth or the regions of water, whichever place is beneficial to thee; mayest thou there be provided with food, and exist in corporeal existence.'[80] (8) *Udakakarma* (offering of water): It is supposed that it cools the dead after the body undergoes cremation. (9) Consoling the mourners: the disconsolate survivors are soothed in their distress by an expert quoting a number of stories showing the transitory nature of life. (10) *Āśauca* (impurity): Social segregation. (11) *Asthisañcayana* (collecting the bones). (12) *Śānti-karma* (pacificatory rite). (13) *Smāraka* (raising a mound over the remains of the dead). (14) *Śrāddha* (offerings to the dead). (15) *Sapiṇḍīkaraṇa* (affiliation of the dead with the manes). This last sacrament takes into account the sentiments and requirements of the dead and the surviving, who are faced with the inevitable event of life, namely, death. The sublime sentiments expressed through its performance make death less unbearable for the individual who expires and the community that has to deal with it.

CONCLUSION

The Hindus realized early that life was a most intricate art that required constant care, cultivation, and refinement. A man born and left to himself is a mass of elements, crude and brutal, and slightly removed from his fellow beings in the forest, and so his life needs much care and protection. The ancient seers and sages gifted with light and resources, tried to transform the crude animal into the refined man with the help of the sacraments. As in philosophy, so in rituals, life is regarded as a cycle. It starts from where it ends. From birth to death it is a continuous series of incidents moving round one pivot—the desire to live, to enjoy, to think, and ultimately to retire. All the *saṁskāras* and allied ceremonies emanate from this. In the beginning of civilization, life was much simpler than it is at present, and it was not divided into compartments. Social institutions, beliefs, sentiments, arts, and science were all closely inter-woven. The *saṁskāras* covered all these fields of life. Religion was then an all-embracing factor in life, and it afforded sanctity and stability to all possible aspects of existence, for which end they also utilized all the moral and material resources they could command. The *saṁskāras* were instituted to create the conditions required for the development of the twice-born Hindus in order to integrate his personality with the society in which he was born, and with the world around him believed to be full of superhuman forces.

[80] *A. V.*, XVIII. 2. 7.

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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETIC BASIS OF HINDU LAW

THE MAJESTY OF LAW

THE Constitution of India heralds the birth of a new and historical epoch in the history of India. It has pledged the country to the task of securing 'to all its citizens justice, social, economic and political'. The ideal of a welfare State is based on the evolution of a new social philosophy. The State now accepts the responsibility of meeting all legitimate demands of social and economic justice, and in meeting these demands, the State has inevitably to fight what the Beveridge Report has so picturesquely described as the 'giants of idleness, disease, squalor, and want'. In pursuit of this ideal, the State rejects the doctrine of unmitigated economic individualism and the theory of *laissez-faire* on which it is founded. As Friedmann has observed, the effect of adopting a new social philosophy is the transformation of the free economic society in which the State is a glorified policeman, but otherwise a disinterested spectator, into a controlled society in which the State is an active participant in the economic and social life of the citizen.[1] In order to appreciate the expanding role of law in a modern democratic welfare State, it has become essential to reconsider the philosophy and principles of law and to re-define the rule of law itself. The problem posed by the planned economy of a welfare State can be reasonably solved only if the need of planning and the force of law on which it tends to rely are reconciled with the claims of individual freedom. That is why a proper study of the rôle of law in the present age of India's freedom presents a fascinating and instructive subject for Indian lawyers and jurists. It is true that too much cannot be expected from law. Nevertheless, in implementing the welfare policies of a democratic State, law has to play a dynamic rôle. And it is this aspect of law that must be properly appreciated by all citizens in a democratic State. The majesty of law was never more eloquently described than by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Says the Upaniṣad, 'He was not yet developed; He created still further a better form, law (*dharma*). This is the power of the Kṣatriya class, namely, law. Therefore, there is nothing higher than law. So, a weak man controls the strong man by law, just as if by a king. Verily that which is law is truth; therefore, they say of a man who speaks the truth, "he speaks the law"; or of a man

[1] W. Friedmann, *Law and Social Change in Contemporary Britain* (1951), p. 281.

who speaks the law, "he speaks the truth". Verily, both these are the same thing.'[2] The object of the present article is to deal very briefly with the broad features of two aspects of the study of Hindu law. What is the historical background of Hindu law, and what is its theoretic basis?

ANCIENT LAW—ITS FEATURES

It is true, as Maitland has observed, that races and nations do not always travel by the same roads and at the same rate. Even so, a comparative study of ancient laws in the world has disclosed a number of remarkable affinities. Maine showed, on the one hand, that legal ideas and institutions have a real course of development as much as the genera and species of living creatures, and in every stage of that development, have their normal characteristics; on the other hand, he made it clear that these processes deserve and require distinct study and cannot be treated as mere incidents in the general history of the societies where they occur.[3] The general conclusions reached by Sir Henry Maine in regard to the characteristics of ancient law have now been broadly accepted as correct. 'If, by any means, we can determine the early forms of jural conceptions', observed Sir Henry Maine, 'they will be invaluable to us. These rudimentary ideas are to the jurist what the primary crusts of the earth are to the geologist. They contain potentially all the forms in which law has subsequently exhibited itself.'[4] According to Maine, the earliest notions connected with the conception of law are those contained in the Homeric words 'Themis' and 'Themistes'. When a king decideu a dispute by his judgement, the judgement was assumed to be the result of direct divine inspiration. 'Themistes', the plural of 'Themis', meant really the awards themselves assumed to have been divinely dictated to the judge. According to Grote, 'Zeus or the human king on earth is no law-maker but a Judge', and his judgements, divinely inspired, constitute law. It is fairly certain that in the earlier stages of the human race, no trace of any legislature in the modern sense of the term, or even of any author of law can be found. At that stage, law has not reached even the footing of custom, properly so called. It is rather a habit, as Maine observes. It is, to render a French phrase, 'in the air'.

The next stage in the development of ancient law witnesses the transfer of authority to pronounce judgements, from the king to the aristocracies. Military and religious oligarchies appear on the scene, and though the authority of the king was not superseded, and the judgements pronounced by the king were the result of the consultation held by the king with members

[2] *Br. U.*, I. 4-14.
[3] Sir Henry Maine, *Introduction to Ancient Law* (1906), Pollock, p. xvi.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

of the military and religious oligarchies. Maine's theory is that in the East these aristocracies became religious, while in the West, they became civil or political. This era of aristocracies succeeding the era of the king may be regarded as a feature of the growth of law in the Indo-European family of nations. Even during this era, the aristocracies do not purport to make the laws. Their claim is based on the monopoly of the knowledge of laws, and the decisions based upon this assumed knowledge of laws tend to give rise to customary law. In this sense, during this epoch the stage of customary law can be said to have been reached.

The study of Roman law shows that the period of customary law in due course led to the era of jurisprudence. This era may be called the era of Codes. The Twelve Tables of Rome can be treated as the best representative of this era. The Twelve Tables, it may be noticed, deal rather with adjectival laws and not with substantive laws. Even during this early stage of development of ancient law, students of history notice that whereas law tends to be stable, and seeks to make the social structure steady and enduring, changing social environments exercised pressures for a change, and an attempt appears always to have been made to bridge the gulf between the letter of the law and the needs of the changing social structure.

There is another feature of all ancient law which deserves to be noticed. Law does not make any distinction between religion, ethics, or morality, on the one hand, and the provisions of what may be called the positive law, on the other. Though in its progress, the legal order appears to have tried to meet the new demands arising out of a multitude of unsatisfied social desires, human agency did not claim the authorship of law. Its origin continued to be divine. The Mosaic Law or Hammurabi's Code or the *Manu Smṛti*, each one in its own way, claimed to be based upon divine inspiration. Demosthenes gave to the Athenian jury four reasons why men ought to obey the law. He said, 'Men ought to obey the law, because "laws are prescribed by God, because they were a tradition taught by wise men who knew the good old customs, because they were deductions from an eternal and immutable moral code, and because they were agreements of men with each other binding them because of a moral duty to keep their promises".'[5] Similarly, it is recorded that Cicero believed that justice and the whole system of social life depended upon the gods and man's belief in them. The law, according to Roman ideas, rested upon the double foundation of divine regulation and human ordinances.[6]

It appears that in mediaeval Europe, the Church successfully claimed

[5] Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (1946), p. 22.
[6] S. Varadachariar, *The Hindu Social System* (1946), p. 33.

exemption from secular authority for the clergy, and also exercised jurisdiction over all people in respect of certain matters which would now be regarded as the subject-matter of civil jurisdiction. During this period, the State regarded itself as under a duty to enforce obedience to the laws of God, and ecclesiastical courts were the instruments through which the State acted.[7] In this connection, it would be interesting to notice the effect of the sentence of excommunication during this age. Excommunication not merely involved imprisonment by the church till the Bishop withdrew the writ on submission by the excommunicate, it led to several temporal consequences as well. 'According to Bracton, the excommunicate cannot sue any one, though he may be sued. He cannot serve upon juries, cannot be a witness in any court, and worst of all, cannot bring any action, real or personal.'[8] It was only after the Renaissance that there set in a period of faith in reason, and the Protestant jurist-theologian developed a theory of law divorced from theology and resting solely upon reason. That, however, is a much later development.

Sir Abdur Rahim expresses the opinion that Mohammedan law sought to supervise the whole life of its subjects, not merely the material or secular sides. According to Sir Abdur Rahim, law has two aspects, religious and secular. The end of law is to promote the welfare of man both individually and socially, not merely in respect of life on this earth but also of future life.[9] It would thus appear that during the early stages of the development of law, what were regarded as rules of law were invariably assumed to have divine origin, and they purported to receive their sanction from the fact that they embodied the dictates of Providence. During this stage of the development of law, the main idea which, according to Pound, supplied the basis of the law was that 'law exists in order to keep the peace in a given society; to keep the peace at all events and at any price. This is the conception of what may be called the stage of primitive law.'[10] In support of this proposition, Pound has referred to the typical theory of Plato. As Plato puts it, 'the shoemaker is to be only a shoemaker and not a pilot also; the farmer is to be only a farmer and not a judge as well; the soldier is to be only a soldier and not a man of business besides; and if a universal genius, who through wisdom can be everything and do everything comes to the ideal city-State, he is to be required to move on.' Aristotle puts the same idea in another way, asserting that justice is a condition in which each keeps within his appointed sphere; that we first take account of relations of inequality, treating individuals according to their worth, and

[7] Holdsworth, *History of the Ancient Law*, p. 616.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 631.
[9] Sir Abdur Rahim, *Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 55.
[10] Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law*, p. 72.

then secondarily of relations of equality in the classes to which their worth requires them to be assigned. Pound concludes that when St. Paul exhorted wives to obey their husbands and servants to obey their masters, and thus everyone to exert himself to do his duty in the class where the social order had put him, he expressed this Greek conception of the end of law.[11]

At this stage, it may be relevant to refer to the subsequent theories about it. According to Kant, law is a system of principles or universal rules to be applied to human action whereby the free will of the actor may co-exist along with the free will of every one else; whereas, according to Hegel, the law is a system of principles wherein and whereby the idea of liberty was realized in human experience. Bentham, however, rationalized law as a body of rules laid down and enforced by the State's authority, whereby the maximum of happiness conceived in terms of free self-assertion was secured to each individual.[12] Lastly, Austin resolved every law into a command of the lawgiver, an obligation imposed thereby on the citizen, and a sanction threatened in the event of disobedience. Austin further predicated of the command, which is the first element in law, that it must prescribe not a single act, but a series or number of acts of the same class or kind.[13] It must, however, be remembered that these are points of view which were evolved much later in the history of law. It is clear that in the early stages of law, no distinction was made between *vinculum juris* and *vinculum pudoris*. The broad features of ancient law which have been indicated, give us a glimpse into the background of ancient law and its theoretic basis. It is the object of this article to inquire how far these features were present in ancient Hindu law, by examining very briefly the historical background and theoretic basis of Hindu law.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HINDU LAW

It may sound platitudinous, but it is nevertheless true to say, that like Hindu culture, Hindu law can justly claim the most ancient pedigree in the history of the world. Unfortunately, absence of reliable chronological data has presented an almost insoluble problem before Oriental scholars in the matter of fixing the dates of ancient Sanskrit works. It was not usual in India in ancient times for authors to supply any biographical data, or to indicate the place and time when they wrote their works. The dates of historical personages and eminent authors are thus left to be determined in the light of intrinsic evidence furnished by literature; and naturally, such a determination has led to a sharp difference and diversity

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 77. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[13] Sir Henry Maine, *Introduction to Ancient Law*, p. 67.

in the scholastic opinion. Generally, Western Orientalists were not inclined to concede sufficient antiquity to ancient Sanskrit literature, whereas Indian Orientalists sometimes showed a subconscious bias in favour of theories which assigned to ancient Indian literature a very ancient antiquity. It is not my present purpose to enter into a discussion about the chronology of the ancient Sanskrit literature bearing on the question of law. I shall, however, be content to take the chronology as accepted by Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. P. V. Kane in his *History of Dharma-śāstra*. I think, on the whole, the chronology accepted by Dr. Kane can be taken to be sound and correct.

Students of Hindu law know that the Vedas occupy a place of pride among the sources of Hindu law recognized by Dharma-śāstra literature. The period of the Vedic Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Upaniṣads ranges between 4000 B.C. and 1000 B.C. The composition of the principal Śrauta-Sūtras of Āpastamba, Āśvalāyana, Baudhāyana, Kātyāyana, and others and some of the Gṛhya-Sūtras, such as those of Āpastamba and Āśvalāyana, can be assigned to the period between 800 B.C. and 400 B.C. From 600 B.C. to 300 B.C. was the period of the Dharma-Sūtras of Gautama, Āpastamba, Baudhāyana, and Vāśiṣṭha and the Gṛhya-Sūtras of Pāraskara and others. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya may have been composed between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100, whereas the present *Manu Smṛti* can claim to have been composed between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* followed between A.D. 100 and A.D. 300. The period of the *Kātyāyana Smṛti* on *vyavahāra* can be taken to be roughly between A.D. 400 and A.D. 600. Most of the other Smṛtis can be assigned to the period between A.D. 600 and A.D. 900. Viśvarūpa wrote his commentary on the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* between A.D. 800 and A.D. 850, whereas Medhātithi wrote his commentary on the *Manu Smṛti* in A.D. 900. Vijñāneśvara's *Mitākṣarā* must have been written between A.D. 1070 and A.D. 1100. Jīmūtavāhana, the author of the *Dāyabhāga*, flourished between A.D. 1100 and A.D. 1150. Raghunandana, the author of the *Dāyatattva* lived between A.D. 1520 and A.D. 1575, whereas the period of Nanda Paṇḍita, the author of the *Dattaka-mīmāṁsā*, is between A.D. 1590 and A.D. 1630. Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa, the author of the *Nirṇaya-sindhu*, must have written his work between A.D. 1610 and A.D. 1640, and Nīlakaṇṭha Bhaṭṭa, the author of the *Vyavahāra-mayūkha*, must have composed his work between A.D. 1615 and A.D. 1645. The *Vīramitrodaya* was composed during the same period, whereas Bālam Bhaṭṭa wrote his commentary on the *Mitākṣarā* between A.D. 1750 and A.D. 1820, and the *Dharma-sindhu* of Kāśīnātha was composed in A.D. 1790.[14] It would thus be seen that the

[14] MM. Dr. P. V. Kane, *H. Dh.*, III. XVII to XIX.

history of the development of Hindu law spreads over a period of nearly 6,000 years, until the British conquered India. During the British rule, the progress of Hindu law was in a sense arrested. The age of commentators came to an end, and in the age of Judges that followed, commentaries usurped the place of the main source of Hindu law. That, however, is another story. When we speak of the historical background of Hindu law, we must take a broad review of the political, social, and economic developments of India during this long vista of time.

ANCIENT INDIAN POLITY

What, then, was the political system prevailing in India in the earliest Vedic times? Dr. Jayaswal has referred to the Vedic theory about the origin of kingship, which is found in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. The Brāhmaṇa asserts that the *devas*, i.e. their worshippers, the Hindus originally had no king. In their struggle against the *asuras*, when the *devas* found that they were repeatedly defeated, they came to the conclusion that it was because the *asuras* had a king to lead them, they were successful. Therefore they decided to try the same experiment. And they agreed to elect a king. 'The *devas* and *asuras* were fighting. The *asuras* defeated the *devas*. The *devas* said, "It is on account of our having no king that the *asuras* defeat us. Let us elect a king". All consented.'[15] The nature of this monarchy can be ascertained from the *White Yajur-Veda*,[16] which requires the following verse to be repeated at the coronation: 'This State to thee (is given). Thou art the director, regulator, firm bearer (of this responsibility) for (the good of) agriculture, for well-being, for prosperity, for growth (of the people), (that is) for success.' A. C. Das also substantially agrees with the same view. He observes that 'A distinguished *ṛṣi* having usually been the moral, spiritual, and political guide of the royal clan that ruled a tribe, we may take it for granted that no successor to a deceased king was appointed without his knowledge or approval. In fact, we have positive evidence to show that he was the real king-maker. In two hymns of the *Atharva-Veda*,[17] the Sage-Priest has been called the king-maker. It was he who suggested the name of a successor to the king probably in consultation with the other members of the royal clan and court, and his nominee presented himself or was invited for election by the people as their king.' 'The monarchy', as Zimmer holds, 'was elective, though it is not clear whether the selection by the people was between the members of the royal family only, or extended to members of all the noble clans'.[18]

[15] K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (1955), p. 184.
[16] IX. 22.
[17] IV. 22. 3. 5.; VIII. 7. 6.
[18] *Vedic Index*, II. p. 211.

There is a verse in the *Ṛg-Veda*,[19] which suggests election of a king by the people or subjects themselves. Wilson has translated it thus: 'Like subjects choosing a king, they (the waters) smitten with fear, fled from Vṛtra.'[20] A. C. Das also refers to a hymn in the *Ṛg-Veda*[21] which indicates that the stability of a king on the throne was contingent on the goodwill of his subjects. The coronation oath, called the *pratijñā*, which was administered to the king on the occasion of his coronation seems to lead to the same conclusion. In the *Mahābhārata*, this oath is described as Śruti, which means, it is based on a Vedic text. This is how the oath runs: 'Mount on the *pratijñā* (take the oath) from your heart (without any mental reservation), in fact and by word of mouth ; (a) "I will see to the growth of the country, regarding it as God Himself and (this) ever and always: (b) Whatever law there is here, and whatever is dictated by ethics, and whatever is not opposed to politics, I will act according to, unhesitatingly. And I will never be arbitrary".' When the king took this oath, the members of the assembly who had gathered to witness the election of the king said in response, 'Amen'.[22]

What was the nature of the State governed by a king thus elected by popular will? Was the State sacerdotal? Was it paternalistic? Did it recognize the divine right of kings? Rangaswami Aiyangar, in his *Ancient Indian Polity*, observes that 'if it is necessary to sum up the several aims and features of our ancient polity in a single word, we shall have to find an equivalent for the French word *"etatisme"*, so as to have it clear that the root principle of our ancient polity was that every function of the State had to be conditioned by and to be subordinated to the need to preserve both Society and the State'.[23] The State was not sacerdotal, nor even paternalistic. The king was subject to the law as any other citizen, and the divine right of kings known to Western political science was unknown in India. On the whole, the aim of the ancient Indian State may be said to have been less to introduce an improved social order, than to act in conformity with the established moral order. It is undoubtedly difficult to describe precisely or in definite terms the nature of the State, when the basic idea on the subject was being adjusted to changing social environments, and the process of adjustment was spread over such a long period of several thousand years. It would not be possible within the narrow limits of the present article to enter upon a detailed discussion of this subject. On the whole, then, it may be said that the picture of ancient

[19] X. 124. 8.
[20] A. C. Das, *Rig Vedic Culture* (1925), p. 307. [21] X. 173.
[22] K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, p. 216.
[23] K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, *Consideration of some aspects of Ancient Indian Polity* (1935), pp. 115 f.

Indian polity which evolves from a careful and analytical study of ancient Sanskrit literature is one of kingship elected by popular will, and later acting in consultation with the priestly class; the ancient Indian theory of kingship treated the kings as trustees of the State, put obedience to divine law above everything else, and required the king to take the oath that he would safeguard the moral, spiritual, and material well-being of the State entrusted to his care.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN ANCIENT INDIA

During the Vedic period, the caste system based on birth was probably unknown. The early social structure evidenced classification of society into three divisions based on occupational differences, and the fourth class included the original residents of this country, whom the Aryans had to fight and conquer, before establishing themselves in their new home in India. Tilak's theory that the Aryans came to India from the Arctic regions and had to conquer the original citizens of India whom they described as Dāsa, can be said to have now been accepted by many Oriental scholars. A. C. Das, however, is of the opinion that there is no evidence in the entire range of Sanskrit literature beginning from the Vedas, that the Aryans came to India as invaders, or that they had a foreign origin.[24] During the subsequent period when the performance of rituals became more important, the Brāhmaṇas attained position of prominence and power, and considerations of purity and notions of spiritual hierarchy tended to make the social divisions known as castes more rigid and artificial. 'The various factors', says Dr. Ghurye, 'that characterize caste-society were the result, in the first instance, of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brāhmaṇic civilization to exclude the aborigines and the Śūdras from religious and social communion with themselves . . . Thus, the Vedic opposition between the Ārya and the Dāsa is replaced by the Brāhmaṇic classification of the *dvijāti* and the *ekajāti* (the Śūdra), suggesting the transmutation of the Dāsa into the Śūdra in the minds of the writers of the Brāhmaṇic and later periods. As an important constituent of the Brāhmaṇic culture in connection with the sacrificial ritual, there arose very exaggerated notions of ceremonial purity.'[25] According to Dr. Ambedkar, however, 'there are two roots from which untouchability has sprung: (a) contempt and hatred of the Broken Men as of Buddhists by the Brāhmaṇas; (b) continuation of beef eating by the Broken Men after it had been given up by others'. Dr. Ambedkar is of opinion that there was no racial or

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 323.
[25] *Castes and Races in India.*

occupational basis for untouchability.[26] The subsequent history of the Hindu social structure shows that the caste system, which thrived on the artificial notions of sacrificial purity led to further and further divisions of Hindu society, and it has shown ominous signs of perpetuating itself. In determining the character and assessing the effect of the contribution made by the Brāhmaṇa priestly class to the development of Hindu law, which recognized the existence of the caste system and gave effect to the principles of social superiority and inferiority in many respects, it may be pertinent to refer to the tribute paid to the Brāhmaṇa class by Maine, who was himself a merciless critic of this class. Says Maine, 'It would be altogether a mistake to regard the class whose ideas are reflected in the literature as a self-indulgent ecclesiastical aristocracy. The life which they chalk out for themselves is certainly not a luxurious, and scarcely a happy, life. It is a life passed from first to last under the shadow of terrible possibilities. It is possibly to this combination of self-assertion with self-denial and self-abasement that the wonderfully stubborn vitality of the main Brāhmanical ideas may be attributed.'[27]

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN ANCIENT INDIA

In considering the historical background of Hindu law, it would also be necessary to remember the existence of the village communities in ancient India. As Sir George Birdwood has truly observed, 'India has undergone more religious and political revolutions than any other country in the world; but the village communities remain in full municipal vigour all over the peninsula'. Unlike the village communities which thrived in other ancient societies, in India these communities had not been consciously created by autonomous centres within themselves by devolution and delimitation of their own functions; but they were practically *sui generis.*[28] It is in the light of this social, economic, and political background that the story about the origin and growth of Hindu law and the principles on which it is based must be studied.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF LAW

The Vedas are usually regarded by Hindu convention as a primary source of Hindu law. In fact, the Vedas do not contain any material which can be regarded as the lawyer's law in the modern sense of the term. They consist of hymns which mainly deal with religious rites, true knowledge, and liberation. Some of the hymns contain exquisite descriptions of

[26] *Untouchables—Who were they and why they became Untouchables* (1948).
[27] *Early Law and Custom*, p. 46.
[28] Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India*, pp. 2-6.

nature, and can be justly regarded as the best specimens of the most ancient lyrical literature. No doubt, some hymns contain passages which make incidental references to the social customs and conventions prevailing at the time, and it is from these incidental references that rules of law have to be gleaned and collected. It is remarkable that the English language does not seem to contain any generic term which denotes both legal and ethical meanings in the concept of law, whereas the Sanskrit word *dharma*, which is generally used in Smṛti literature to denote law, cannot be dissociated from considerations of ethics and morality. But even the word *dharma* has passed through several vicissitudes, and it is really difficult to render its meaning definitely or precisely. The most ancient concept of law which is found in the *Ṛg-Veda* is represented by the word *ṛta*. This word denotes the supreme transcendental law or the cosmic order which rules the universe, and to which even the gods owe allegiance. As Dr. Kane points out, *vrata*, *dharma*, *dhāman*, and *svadhā* represent special aspects of *ṛta*. *Ṛta* is the organized principle of the universe and the divine ordering of the earthly life.[29] Subsequently, the concept of *dharma* took the place of *ṛta*. Dr. Kane has observed that the word *dharma* occurs at least fifty-six times in the *Ṛg-Veda*. The word is clearly derived from the root *dhṛ* (to uphold, to support, to nourish). In most of the cases, the meaning of *dharma* is religious ordinance or rites. In some passages, it appears to mean fixed principles or rules of conduct. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the word *dharma* seems to be used in an abstract sense, viz. the whole body of religious duties.[30] Dr. Kane's conclusion is that the word *dharma* passed through several transitions of meaning, and ultimately, its most prominent significance came to be the privileges, duties, and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the Aryan community, as a member of one of the castes, and as a person in a particular stage of life.[31] Jaimini defines *dharma* as a desirable goal or result that is indicated by injunctive passages.[32] The *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* defines *dharma* as that from which result happiness and final beatitude.[33] In the Buddhist sacred books, the word *dharma* often means the whole teaching of the Buddha. In the Smṛti literature, the word *dharma* was used in a comprehensive sense, and it included amongst many other topics what may be regarded as rules of secular law. This branch of *dharma* dealing with secular law known by the word *vyavahāra* can be regarded as the most developed phase in the evolution of the concept of law, which corresponds with the modern sense of municipal or secular law. According to Kātyāyana, the

[29] MM. Dr. P. V. Kane, *H. Dh.*, III. pp. 244, 245.
[30] VII. 17.
[31] *H. Dh.*, I. p. 2.
[32] *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, I, 1. 2.
[33] I. 1.

etymological meaning of the word *vyavahāra* indicates that it is that branch of law, which removes various doubts. *Vi* means various, *ava* means doubt, and *hāra* means removal. The object of *vyavahāra* on this interpretation would be the removal of doubts. The administration of justice undoubtedly aims at the discovery of truth; and since law helps to remove doubts, it does help the administration of justice in its quest for truth. The view that *vyavahāra* refers to secular and municipal laws is supported by the statement in the *Mahābhārata* that the authority of the *vyavahāra* laws is as sacred and great as that of the *dharma* law. Whereas *dharma* law has its origin in Vedic law, the *vyavahāra* law has its origin in political governance and the king; governance is a sacred act being ordained by the Creator, and so its laws are also sacred.[34] Thus, it appears that whereas the concept of *dharma* treated law as a part of ethics, morality, and religion, the concept of *vyavahāra* is a more developed concept, and it deals principally, if not exclusively, with matters which fall within the purview of municipal or secular law.

SOURCES OF HINDU LAW

According to Manu, there are five different sources of *dharma*; the whole Veda is the main source of *dharma*, and next is the tradition and practice of those who know the Vedas. Further, the usages of various men and self-satisfaction.[35] Similarly, Yājñavalkya declares that 'the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the usages of good men and what is agreeable to one's self, and desire born of due deliberation—these are traditionally recognized as the sources of *dharma*'.[36] The nature and extent of the guidance derived from the Vedic texts in determining the provisions of Hindu law have already been indicated. Even a cursory glance at the Smṛti literature would show that the Smṛtis deal with numerous topics as falling under the title Dharma-śāstra. As Medhātithi points out, Manu, for instance, deals with *varṇa-dharma, āśrama-dharma, varṇāśrama-dharma, naimittika-dharma* (*prāyaścitta*), and *guṇa-dharma* (the duty of a crowned king, whether Kṣatriya or not, to protect). It is really the *vyavahāra* part of the Smṛti literature which deals with law, properly so called. Kumārila in his *Tantra-vārttika* argues that the Smṛtis of Manu and others are dependent upon the memory of other authors, and memory depends for its authority on the truthfulness of its source. Consequently, the authority of not a single Smṛti can be held to be self-sufficient like that of the Vedas; and yet, inasmuch as we find them accepted as authoritative by an unbroken line of respectable persons learned in the Vedas, we cannot reject them as

[34] *Mbh.*, XII. 121. 49-57. [35] II. 6. [36] I. 7.

absolutely untrustworthy. Hence it is that there arises a feeling of uncertainty regarding their trustworthy character.[37] Thus, the Smṛtis are treated as a source of Hindu law, primarily because they purport to reproduce from memory the provisions in the Vedas themselves. That is the conventional view about the part played by the Smṛtis in the growth of Hindu law. The history of the development of Hindu law shows that custom, which is regarded as a source of law, has played a very important role in making Hindu law progressive and introducing into it from time to time provisions to bridge the difference between the letter of the law and the requirements of changing social needs. Ancient Hindu jurists seem to recognize that if there is a conflict between the practice prevailing in the community and the letter of the law found in the Smṛtis or Śrutis, it is generally the practice that would prevail. Manu says, '*Ācāras* (customs and usages) are transcendental law, and so are the practices declared in the Vedas and the Smṛtis. Therefore, a twice-born person desirous of his own welfare must make efforts to follow it.' Dr. Kane takes the view—and I am inclined to agree with him—that the *ācāra* which is mentioned by Manu has to be taken by itself and not as qualified by the words *śrutyukta* and *smārta*. Texts of Gautama, Manu, Kātyāyana, and other writers show that the customs and usages of which notice has to be taken are those of districts (*deśa* or *janapada*), towns and villages, castes, families, guilds, and corporations or groups.[38] In this connection, it would be pertinent to refer to the significant observation of Vijñāneśvara while commenting on *Yājñavalkya*, II. 118-119, that the texts in the section are mostly *recitals of what actually prevails among the people*. In other words, the *Mitākṣarā* makes it clear that the relevant provisions contained in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* have given effect to the prevailing local practices among the people. In ancient Dharma-śāstra literature, we find illuminating discussions as to how a conflict between laws evidenced by different texts has to be resolved. Kauṭilya says that in any matter where there is conflict between Dharma-śāstra and practice or between Dharma-śāstra and any secular transaction, the king should decide that matter by relying on *dharma*. If the Śāstra comes in conflict with any rational or equitable rule, the latter shall be the deciding factor, and the strict letter of the text shall be nowhere.[39] Indeed, Āpastamba has mentioned that some jurists in his time held that the rest of the Dharma-Sūtra not set out in his book might be gathered from women and men of all castes.[40] Both Bṛhaspati and Nārada lay down that legal decisions should not be arrived at merely on the basis of the Śāstra, and that when a decision

[37] *Tantravārttika*, Translation, p. 105
[38] *H. Dh.*, III pp. 875-876.
[39] *Kauṭ.*, III. 1.
[40] *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 11. 29. 14-15.

is devoid of reasoning, there is loss of *dharma*, for in a judicial proceeding even a good man may be held to be a bad one, or what is good may be held to be sinful, just as Māṇḍavya was held to be a thief on a decision without thoughtful reasoning.[41] This shows that even when the texts of the Śruti and Smṛti were respected, jurists pointed out the inevitable importance of adopting a rational approach in deciding legal issues.

In due course of time, when the distance between the letter of the Smṛtis and the prevailing customs threatened to get wider, commentators appeared on the scene, and by adopting ingenious interpretations of the same ancient texts, they achieved the laudable object of bringing the provisions of the law into line with popular usages and customs. The part played by Vijñāneśvara in this connection deserves special mention. The fiction of interpretation is seen in the three systems of jurisprudence known to us, the Roman, the English, and the Hindu system. But as Mr. Sankararama Sastri points out, there is an interesting distinction among the three systems on this point. Whereas the authority of the English case law is derived from the Bench, that of the Roman *Responsa Prudentium* and the Sanskrit commentary is derived from the Bar. While in England the development of law is left entirely to the exigencies of disputes actually arising for adjudication, in India and at Rome, it was possible for the jurist to evolve a coherent and homogeneous body of laws without reference to actually contested cases.[42] In this connection, it may be interesting to refer to the observations of Bentham that a legal fiction is a 'wilful falsehood having for its object the stealing of legislative power by and for hands which could not and durst not openly claim it—and but for the delusion thus produced could not exercise it'. Nevertheless, the legal fiction of interpretation has played a very progressive part in the development of Hindu law. It is because this process was arrested during the British rule in this country that Hindu law came to be fossilized, as judges relied mainly on the commentators without taking into account the changing customs and usages in the Hindu community.

The genesis of Hindu law, to which incidental references are found in the Vedic literature, still remains to be considered. Jayaswal has propounded the thesis that the ancient and primary source of Hindu law is *samayas*, that is to say, resolutions passed by popular bodies. Āpastamba describes the *dharma* laws as those which regulate conduct, and which are based on resolutions or *samayas*.[43] The word *samaya* may mean a resolution passed by corporate bodies. According to Jayaswal, the *dharma samayas*

[41] Quotation from Aparārka on *Yāj*., II. 1., *H. Dh.*, I. p. 208.
[42] Sankararama Sastri, *Fictions in the Development of the Hindu Law Texts* (1926), p. 169.
[43] I. 1. 1. 1.

were laws resolved upon by certain popular bodies, which were bodies of the Vedic schools, collectively or individually. The *samayas* were originally communal rules agreed upon in assemblies.[44] It is these assemblies which in due course may have developed into village communities, which are a special feature of the ancient Indian political life. In his last *sūtra*, Āpastamba refers to the same source of law when he says that the authoritative works do not exhaust the *dharma*—laws, and hence the unanimous practice of all the Aryan countries is to be referred.[45] It is true that the Dharma-Sūtras mention the Vedas as the chief source of Hindu law. The *samaya* source to which Āpastamba refers is not to be found in the later literature. Patañjali recognizes the authority of the Dharma-Sutras, collectively calling them Dharma-śāstra. The sources of law mentioned by Manu and Yājñavalkya have already been indicated. That the conventions or resolutions of corporate bodies formed part of law is shown by an interesting inscription referred to by Dr. Mahalingam in his book *Administrative and Social Life under Vijayanagar*.[46] The inscription in question records an agreement between the Brāhmaṇas of the locality that they should perform marriages only in the *kanyādana* form, and that those who pay or receive money shall be excommunicated and punished by the king. It may therefore not be unreasonable to assume that the primary and ancient source of Hindu law may have consisted of the resolutions or agreements reached by groups of people in their corporate assemblies.

THE RELATION BETWEEN ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA AND DHARMA-ŚĀSTRA

The discussion about the sources of Hindu law and the rules adopted by Hindu law in resolving the conflict between these sources *inter se* inevitably leads to the most important question in the present study. What is the relation between Artha-śāstra and Dharma-śāstra? The publication by Dr. Shama Sastri of the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya in 1909 in the Mysore Sanskrit Series was an epoch-making event in the history of the research on Hindu law. Kauṭilya wrote this work between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100. This work is anterior to Manu, and the discussion contained in the 'Dharmasthīyaṁ' part of the work is absolutely unique in legal history. It can legitimately claim to be one of the earliest secular codes of law in the world, and the high level at which legal and juridical principles are discussed, the precision with which statements are made, and the absolutely secular atmosphere which it breathes throughout, give it a place of pride in the history of legal literature. It throws a flood of light on the social, economic, and

[44] K. P. Jayaswal, *Manu and Yājñavalkya—A Basic History of Hindu Law*, p. 65.
[45] *Āpastamba*, II. 11. 29. (?)... *Āpastamba*, I 1. 1. (23)
[46] Madras 19, p. 252.

political conditions of the country at the time. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* is divided into 15 *adhikaraṇas* and 150 chapters, and it deals with nearly 180 topics. The total number of verses in the work is about 6,000. In between verses, prose is also sometimes interspersed. This work shows a systematic arrangement of topics and a remarkable unity of design. There can be no doubt that it is the work of a brilliant author who approached his problem in a purely secular, legalistic, and objective manner. It appears that Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* refers to more than a dozen previous authors on Artha-śāstra; and this naturally leads to the inference that municipal and secular law had been expounded before Kauṭilya by several other authors. And it would inevitably take the foundation of the school of Artha-śāstra to a date much anterior to that of Kauṭilya. The question which arises for consideration is, did secular law as propounded in the *Arthaśāstra* begin to function and progress independently of Hindu law which is to be found in Smṛti literature?

Jayaswal has strongly pleaded for the view that Artha-śāstra had progressed independently of the Dharma-śāstra, until the present *Manu Smṛti* was composed.[47] According to him, the *Arthaśāstra* in substance embodies the imperial code of law of the Mauryas, whereas the *Mānava Dharma-śāstra* is based on the psychology of the Hindu nation of the Brāhmaṇa empire of the Śuṅgas. Yājñavalkya, on the other hand, who followed Manu, represents the view of Hindu law as it prevailed in the Sātavāhana regime. It is more liberal than Manu in its general aspects and less generous to the Brāhmaṇas. In some important matters, it has more affinity with the *Arthaśāstra* than with Manu. Unlike Manu, Yājñavalkya devotes larger space to the consideration of the problems of civil law, properly so called. Yājñavalkya deals with contract generally and with partnership of sea traders and artisans, and the law of corporations is also considered by him. According to Jayaswal's theory, after the *Manu Smṛti* achieved eminence and authority, the independent existence of the *Arthaśāstra* came to an end, and *vyavahāra* became merely a part of the Dharma-śāstra. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* which virtually repealed the *Manu Smṛti* no doubt adopted a more liberal and less Brāhmaṇical approach; but even Yājñavalkya treated *vyavahāra* as a part of *dharma*, and that settled the pattern and form of Hindu law for the future. In course of time, commentators followed, and they made requisite adjustments in the provisions of Yājñavalkya, and consistently with the social trends of their times, the liberal provisions of Yājñavalkya came generally to be narrowed down. Rangaswami Aiyangar seems broadly to agree with this view.[48]

[47] Jayaswal, *Manu and Yājñavalkya*.
[48] *Considerations of some aspects of Ancient Indian Polity* (1935)

The theory thus propounded by Jayaswal has been strongly criticized by S. Varadachariar.[49] He points out that it is not correct to say that the *Manu Smṛti* was the first book of Dharma-śāstra, which included the discussion of law, and that it could not be assumed to have come into existence only during the Śuṅga period. He also relies on the fact that some topics of law have, in fact, been dealt with even in the Dharma-Sūtras of Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Āpastamba, and that the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas did not commence with the Śuṅga dynasty; it had, in fact, begun after the fall of Buddhism. But the main point which Varadachariar makes is that Jayaswal's theory is inconsistent with the history of evolution of the other systems of law, to which I have already adverted. Dr. Kane seems to take the view that Artha-śāstra is really a branch of Dharma-śāstra, since the former deals with the responsibilities of kings, for whom rules are laid down in many treatises on *dharma*.[50]

I am inclined to agree with Jayaswal. It would be interesting to notice a few of the points of difference between Kauṭilya and Manu, because these differences indicate a sharp and radical disparity of approach. Kauṭilya allows *niyoga* (levirate) in its ancient fullness to widows and to the wives of men afflicted with disease; Manu condemns it. Kauṭilya would recognize the existence of courtesans and would seek to organize them; whereas Manu would punish them as a public scourge. Kauṭilya would attempt to regulate gambling and drink; Manu condemns it as sin. Kauṭilya knows of remarried widows and unmarried mothers; Manu would forbid remarriages except in the case of widows who were virgins. Manu strongly disapproves of heresy, while Kauṭilya does not seem to share that view, because he would go no further than deprive apostates of the right of maintenance from the family estate, and even in respect of apostates, he would require the mother to be maintained by her offspring. Kauṭilya and Manu differ in regard to the shares to be allotted to sisters on inheritance. Kauṭilya forbids suicide, and disapproves of *satī*, whereas Manu does not seem to renounce *satī* expressly. Kauṭilya condemns addiction to astrology; Manu would only discourage the pursuit of astrology as a profession. There are also several differences in regard to the status, privileges, and concessions enjoyed by Brāhmaṇas under Kauṭilya and Manu. These differences can be satisfactorily explained on the theory that the *Arthaśāstra* was dealing with secular law and approached the consideration of relevant questions from a purely secular point of view, whereas Dharma-śāstra considered the same problems from an ethical, religious, or moral point of view, and gave effect to the notions on which the Hindu social structure was based.

[49] *Radhakumud Mookerji Endowment Lectures on the Hindu Judicial System*, pp. 38 f.
[50] *H. Dh.*, I. p. 87.

There is another aspect of the matter which leads to the same conclusion. Kauṭilya holds that *dharma*, *vyavahāra*, customs, and royal ordinance are the four legs of lawsuits, that the latter in each case supersedes the former. This clearly assigns a prominent position to royal ordinance. This position of royal ordinance is not recognized by Dharma-śāstra. Then again, Kauṭilya refers to the *dharma* rule as distinguished from the rule of *vyavahāra*, in dealing with the question of awarding interest. He says that interest allowed by the *dharma*—law is one and a quarter per cent per month; and he adds that the rate allowed by *vyavahāra* is five per cent per month. This clearly shows that the provisions of *vyavahāra* according to the *Arthaśāstra* on the question of interest were distinct and separate from similar provisions in Dharma-śāstra. On the whole, then, it appears to be reasonable and sound to assume the existence of Artha-śāstra functioning independently of Dharma-śāstra and dealing with secular or municipal law, not necessarily as a part of *dharma* or religion. The *artha* law under Artha-śāstra recognized the authority of the king's laws, and treated the kingly enactments as of binding character.

It is true that the emergence and development of a purely secular body of law at such an early date would be a very remarkable achievement, and it would seem to be somewhat inconsistent with the well-recognized theory of the evolution of laws in ancient societies. But the existence of a large body of legal literature passing under the name of Artha-śāstra poses a problem; and it cannot be resolved by merely treating Artha-śāstra as part of Dharma-śāstra, because the scope of the inquiry in the two sets of works, their approach, their outlook, the nature and number of the topics taken for discussion by them, and the disparity in the specific provisions on material points do not easily admit of the said explanation. It may be that subsequent to Manu, Artha-śāstra ceased to exist or function separately, and the Hindus began to take their law from Smṛtis and commentaries on them. But the discovery of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* has administered a healthy shock to the accepted notion about the origin of Hindu law, and it would not be right to reject Jayaswal's theory substantially and principally on the ground that it does not fit in with the development of law in ancient times in other countries.

Indeed, it may be legitimate to say that the very harsh criticism made by Maine against ancient Hindu law must now be regarded as unjustified. 'On the whole', says Maine, 'the impression left on the mind by the study of these books (books on Dharma-śāstra) is, that a more awful tyranny never existed than this which proceeded from the union of political, intellectual,

and spiritual ascendancy'.[51] And he adds that 'Hindoo jurisprudence has a substratum of forethought and sound judgement, but irrational imitation has engrafted in it an immense apparatus of cruel absurdities'.[52] Maine speaks very highly of the Twelve Tables, and observes that 'they were not entitled to say that if the Twelve Tables had not been published, the Romans would have been condemned to a civilization as feeble and perverted as that of the Hindoos, but this much at least is certain that with their code they were exempt from the very chance of so unhappy a destiny'.[53] It must be stated in fairness to the great author that at the time when he wrote his book, Oriental scholars were not aware of the existence of Artha-śāstra, and Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* had not seen the light of day. But if the *Arthaśāstra* had existed long before the Roman Tables were composed, the harsh language used by Maine about ancient Hindu lawyers must be characterized as wholly unjustified and based on insufficient knowledge of the development of Hindu law.

I am free to confess that before the last word is spoken on this vexed question of the relation between Artha-śāstra and Dharma-śāstra, it would be necessary to examine all available literature comprehensively and critically. Perhaps, in course of time, other works on Artha-śāstra may be discovered, and they may throw additional light on the question. Unfortunately, during the British rule, Hindu law has not been studied 'from within', with the help of Sanskrit texts. As the Privy Council observed in the case of *Collector of Madura* v. *Mootoo Ramalinga*,[54] the duty of a judge administering Hindu law was not 'so much to enquire whether a disputed doctrine is fairly deducible from the earliest authority, as to ascertain whether it has been received by the particular school which governs the District with which he has to deal'. This approach imposed limitations on judges, and in the administration of Hindu law, commentators respected in several areas assumed paramount importance. But, for a proper study of Hindu law, its origin, growth, and development, it would be necessary to undertake a study of all the Sanskrit texts available on the subject. The relevant literature offers, as Dr. Rash Behari Ghose observed long ago, a rich and varied field for enquiry. 'The harvest has long been ripening for the sickle, but as yet, to our reproach, the reapers are few in number, and that wealth of materials which should be our pride is now our disgrace.'[55] Dr. Ghose also prophetically expressed the hope 'that Hindu

Early Law and Custom, p. 46.
Ancient Law, p 17
Ibid., p. 17.
12 Moore's Ind App., 397, 436
Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, *Law of Mortgages*, IVth Edn., p. 35

law will at no distant date render the same service to jurisprudence that Sanskrit has already done to the sister science of philology'. I believe that when the part played by Artha-śāstra in the development of Hindu law is fully discovered, the prophecy made by Dr. Ghose would come true.

26

THE HINDU JUDICIAL SYSTEM

A truly magnificent administration of justice, synchronizing the highest principles with the fairest procedure, is the contribution of the Hindu judicial system in India. Itself a product of centuries of evolution, this system anticipates future centuries of legal thought. This oldest system, older than the jurisprudence of Rome and England, is surprisingly modern. Legal and historical scholars have yet to work hard and long in this vast field of research to explore and appreciate the wisdom, excellence, and maturity of the Hindu judicial system.

SABHĀ

The origin of the Hindu judicial system can be traced from the prehistoric Vedic times. It is certainly more than 3000 years old, if not older still. The *sabhā* (Judicial assembly) is usually associated with the later period of the *Ṛg Veda*. In the *Atharva-Veda*[1] reference is made to the fire which used to be kept in the court room or the *sabhā*, and the Vedic term *sabhya* appears to indicate such fire. The *Ṛg-Veda*[2] describes the *sabhā* and refers to the delights and relief of litigants when they came out successful from the *sabhā's* deliberations. In the *puruṣamedha* of the *Śukla Yajur-Veda*,[3] the *sabhā* is described as the place where a litigant receives justice. In the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-Sūtra*,[4] there is the description of the function and atmosphere of the *sabhā*. It indicates animated discussion with lively debate and formulation of justice. Jayarāma describes the *sabhā* as 'resounding' and 'shining' because of the performance of justice. The Jātakas describe the high standards which the *sabhā* was expected to maintain. According to the Jātakas, the *sabhā* which had no good people was no *sabhā*, and the people who did not proclaim the *dharma* (justice) were not good people; those who avoided personal sentiments and fearlessly proclaimed justice were the good people of the *sabhā*.[5] Nārada emphasizes the importance of elderly people, *dharma*, and truth in the court of justice.[6]

INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY

The independence of the judiciary was one of the outstanding features of the Hindu judicial system. Even during the days of the Hindu

[1] VIII. 10. 5.
[2] X. 71. 10.
[3] XXX. 6.
[4] III. 13.
[5] V. 509.
[6] III. 18. Cf. *Mbh.*, V. 35. 58.

monarchy, the administration of justice always remained separate from the executive. It was as a rule independent both in form and in spirit. It was the Hindu judicial system that first realized and recognized the importance of separation of the judiciary from the executive, and gave this fundamental principle a practical shape and form. The case of Anāthapiṇḍika *v.* Jeta, reported in the *Vinaya-Piṭaka*,[7] is a shining illustration of this principle. There a prince and a private citizen submitted their case to the law-court, and the court decided against the prince. The prince accepted such a decision as a matter of course and as binding on him. The evolution of the principle of separation of the judiciary from the executive was largely the result of the Hindu conception of law as binding on the sovereign. Law in Hindu jurisprudence was above the sovereign. It was the *dharma*. The laws were then not regarded so much as a product of supreme parliaments and legislatures as at present. Certain laws were regarded as above all human authority. Such, for instance, were the natural laws, which no parliament, however supreme, could abolish. Technically speaking, a supreme parliament may proclaim a law abolishing the law of gravitation, but it will not, in fact, be abolished by the parliament's fiat. The doctrine was not merely confined to natural or scientific laws, but extended to certain social laws which the experience, wisdom, and intuitive powers of highly developed personalities could discover as unalterable having regard to human nature and the laws of biology. All this body of laws, which had a higher authority than human agencies, was compendiously called the *dharma*. The judicial system in Hindu India always worked on this first premise. Its genius lay in adapting this first premise to the changing patterns of society with which it had to deal from time to time. The first premise is not the same as ***Jus Gentium*** or ***Jus Naturali*** of Roman jurisprudence, but was a much larger, more scientific, and more concrete concept.

The other agency which helped to establish the independence of the judiciary was the fact that in the Hindu judicial system lawyers were appointed judges, and lawyers, as a rule, at that time came largely from the Brāhmaṇa class, who, as exponents of the *dharma*, had to be obeyed by the executive and the sovereign. The ***Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*** as well as the Jātakas refer to the division of the Brāhmaṇas into two classes, the priests and the politicians. In fact, the divisions are described as being composed of *purohita* (priest) politicians and the Brāhmaṇa ministers.

This independence of the judiciary was ensured by high standards followed in appointing judges. Nārada states that judges should be

[7] *Cullavagga*, VI. 4. 9.

selected from among Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas. The sovereign was the appointing authority, but was assisted and advised in the selection by the sabhā and other members of the King-in-Council. The judge or the *prāḍvivāka* had to have the following qualifications:

'The judge must be self-controlled, of a respectable family, impartial, not given to excitement, steadfast, afraid of the hereafter, virtuous, energetic, and free from passion.'[8]

THE COURT

It was a significant fact that the judges under this system were helped by society in the administration of justice. They were both judges of law and the jury, being the judges of fact. Their number was always odd, in case there was a necessity to decide by the majority. The rule of the *sabhā* was that everyone should speak according to law. It was considered that to keep silent or to speak what was not the law was sinful. According to Nārada, 'either the judicial assembly (*sabhā*) must not be entered at all or a fair opinion delivered. That means, he who either stands mute or delivers an opinion contrary to justice is a sinner.'[9] The king appointed councillors to assist deliberations in the court. It was the rule of the day that every person versed in law should attend the court and, if occasion arose, should be invited to give his own opinion on a disputed point of law to prevent obvious miscarriage of justice. This procedure is comparable to the modern practice of calling upon a lawyer not engaged in the case to assist the court as *amicus curiae*, a friend of the court. Indeed, Manu declares that silence in such a case is culpable.[10] This is clear from the verse of Nārada referred to above. This, however, was not an invitation for public participation in a litigation. Nārada is anxious to make it clear that in a litigious dispute one who has no appointed function should not be allowed to say anything, and one who is versed in law should alone be allowed to speak what is proper, and that, too, only when he has no leaning towards any of the particular litigants.

The court scene in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* (*c.* third century A.D.) makes a reference to the jury.[11] The *Śukra-nīti-sāra*,[12] Bṛhaspati,[13] and Nārada[14] all describe the function of the jury. There the jury was composed of either seven or five or three persons, and they were described as the examiners of the cause, while the judge, their president, was called the 'speaker', and the king as carrying out the punishment. There were thus

[8] Cf. *Kāt.* (61), quoted in the *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.* (I. 6).
[9] Cf. *Nār.*, Introd., III. 10 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p. 48).
[10] VIII. 18.
[11] IX. 14.
[12] IV. 5. 267.
[13] I. 62. 3 (*GOS*, p. 10 f.).
[14] Introd., III. 4-5 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p. 36 f.).

checks and balances, so that even when justice was dispensed with by the judge, there was a safeguard against the leanings of any particular judge.

To keep the judiciary free even from the influence of the king, the law was that the king himself was not allowed to hear cases. Nārada[15] as well as Bṛhaspati[16] expressly declares that the king was not allowed to decide cases by himself alone. The king was present and sat in his council, which included the Chief Justice. These were cases which in the modern world would be cases on appeal, and the court with the king was the highest Court of Appeal. In the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, this procedure of the King-in-Council finds confirmation in the case described there in the reign of King Yaśaskara.[17]

The modern practice of all the courts and their processes functioning in the name of the head of the State or the king was also the rule in the Hindu judicial system. In theory, the king always presided over the court, whether he was personally present there or not. This is supported by the *Vīramitrodaya*,[18] and Manu.[19] The decree also was given under the seal of the court and was described as a document given in the name of the king. The king's name also appeared in the summonses to attend the court as well as in all other processes for execution.

Full records of cases decided by the courts were kept. The Jātakas make frequent references to such records. They are sometimes described as *viniścaya pustaka*.[20] Vasiṣṭha also makes reference to the judicial records of cases decided by the courts.

It was a part of the Hindu judicial system that justice had to be administered openly and not in private (*na rahasi*), and never by one judge alone. The *Śukra-nīti-sāra*[21] gives a graphic picture of the king, the court and the procedure: 'According to the Dharma-śāstras, being devoid of anger and greed, with the Chief Justice and the Council, attended by good Brāhmaṇas, collected in mind, observant of the procedure and sequence, never one-sided, but an attentive listener, a king should examine the dispute and never himself decide in the *sabhā*.'

The doctrine of *res judicata* (plea of a former judgement) was well recognized in the Hindu judicial system and uniformly followed both during the Hindu and the Buddhistic periods.[22]

SYSTEM OF JUDICIARY AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

The system of judiciary and its mode of judicial administration anticipates almost all the ideas which we now trace as products of the British

[15] *Ibid.*, I 35 (*SBE*, XXXIII p 14)
[16] I 24 (*SBE*, XXXIII p 280)
[17] VI 14 69
[18] Ed by Jivananda Vidyasagar Bhattacharya, 1875, p 39 f
[19] VII
[20] III 292
[21] IV 5 5-6
[22] *Cullavagga*, V 4 14 21

legal history and call modern. The *Śukra-nīti-sāra*[23] gives us as complete a picture of the system as possible in a few words:

First, there was the Chief Justice, called the *prāḍvivāka*, who presided over the Supreme Court in the capital of the kingdom. Next in order of precedence came the Minister of Justice, who prescribed the law and the procedure after ascertaining the opinion of the majority of the jury on the subject, and then advised the king accordingly. It almost appears to be like the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, who advise the British Sovereign. The *prāḍvivāka*, along with the members of the jury, gathered in a meeting and ascertained by majority of opinion the procedure and the laws. Then proof was examined and scrutinized. This proof consisted of evidence given by witnesses and that contained in documents. Three different kinds of proof were recognized in the Hindu judicial system, according to the *Śukra-nīti-sāra*.[24] They were direct evidence (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and analogy (*upamāna*). It was the duty of the *prāḍvivāka* to advise the king ultimately. The Minister of Law, sometimes called the *dharmādhikaraṇa*,[25] is called the *paṇḍita* in the *Śukra-nīti-sara*.[26] The duties of the *paṇḍita* are to consider first the ancient and the present laws, test them in the light of the current codes and jurisprudence, and then recommend to the king laws which will be acceptable to the community.

No account of the Hindu judicial system can be complete without some reference to the fact that there were Hindu republics in ancient times as much as monarchies. There was a remarkable interlinking co-ordination in the judicial system in both the monarchies and the republics. It was possible only because law as *dharma* was common to both.

The Hindu law-books refer to the laws of *kula* States and those of *gaṇas*.[27] The *kulikas* or aristocrats presided over the *kula* courts[28] The laws provide that an appeal lies from the *kula* court to the *gaṇa* court.[29] According to the *Mahābhārata*,[30] it was the duty of the *kula* elders to take notice of criminal cases, and these *kula* elders administered justice through a President, and punishment was given in his name. These were not the only courts known in the Hindu judicial system. It recognized what may be called guilds, which were given some judicial power. These guilds were mainly industrial organizations. They were more or less the counterparts and forerunners of the modern Industrial Tribunals and Courts. Appeals were allowed from these Industrial Courts, which were called

[23] II. 92 100. [24] IV. 5. 271
[25] *Viṣṇu dharmottara*, II 24 24-5 ; *Mat* (215 24), has *dharmādhikaraṇin*
[26] II 85 [27] *Yāj.*, I 360 ; II. 186. [28] *Bṛ Sm.*, I 94 (*GOS*, p 16)
[29] *Nār*, Introd, I. 7 (*SBE*, XXXIII p 6) ; *Manu*, VIII 2
[30] XII. 107. 6 32

pūgas. These appeals came to the *kula* and *gaṇa* courts. When *gaṇas* became subject to the monarchs subsequently, the decision of the *gaṇa* was subject to an appeal to the monarch or the Royal Chief Justice. This is supported by the law-books of Nārada, Bṛhaspati, and others.[31] These *gaṇa* courts were really the courts administering the laws of the Hindu republics in India, and it is from this feature that they draw their name *gaṇa*, meaning the people or the republic. The Greek writers paid great tributes to the laws of these *gaṇa* courts. The *Mahābhārata*[32] also praises their excellent legal system. The laws of the *gaṇas* were called *samaya* by Nārada.[33] Bṛhaspati quoted in the *Smṛti-candrikā* shows that the word *samaya* literally means a decision arrived together in an assembly.[34]

HINDU JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN SIX STAGES

Any analysis of the Hindu judicial system must make a reference to at least six different stages through which it had to pass. The first stage of the Hindu law was the stage in which there was no writing. The Śruti and the Smṛti were then the only sources. The duties of the courts of law of this period were performed by the heads of the family, of the *gotras* (clans) and of the *pravaras* (progenitors) by themselves, or by getting an umpire selected by the parties. That is how the *Smṛti-candrikā* quotes Bhṛgu on the point.[35]

The second stage commences with the introduction of writing, which first appeared as a substance of the Smṛtis and of some of the Brāhmanas in the form of *sūtras* (aphorisms). This second stage is the stage of the written Sūtras. The main function of the judicial system and the courts of law at that time was the application of the Sūtras in deciding individual disputes. The third stage is the stage of codification. The Vedas were embodied in the forms of Saṁhitās. A new departure was also made in the Smṛti from the Gṛhya and the Dharma-Sūtras to the Saṁhitās or institutes which were called the Dharma-śāstras. These Dharma-śāstras can be compared to the Institutes of Justinian or to Blackstone's Commentary. They were really text-books on law. While they did not have the force of statutes, they nevertheless were regarded as authorities of such great persuasion that much, if not the whole, of law was inspired by them, and they acted as guides for the courts of the time on all controversial and disputed points of law and their application to practical life.

By the third stage, the administration of justice was becoming elaborate and complicated. During this period, there were really two sets of courts

[31] *Nār.*, Introd., I. 7 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p 6); *Bṛ Sm.*, I. 31 (*SBE*, XXXIII p 282)
[32] XII. 107.
[33] *Nār.*, X. 1-2.
[34] II. pp. 222 3.
[35] II p 18.

available to the litigants. First, there were the courts directly under the authority of the State. Secondly, there were the courts of a popular character constituted by the people themselves, either through local *sabhās* or *pañcāyats* or village councils or even family or tribal councils. The valuable research in this field made by Colebrooke reveals to us three different categories of State Courts and three different categories of People's Courts. The State Courts, where people could go for redress, were: (1) The Court of the Sovereign, assisted by the learned Brāhmaṇas as assessors. This was the Privy Council or the King-in-Council. This Court was ambulatory and was held wherever the king sat or went. (2) The 'Tribunal' of the Chief Justice or the ***prāḍvivāka*** appointed by the Sovereign and sitting with three or more assessors, not exceeding seven. This was the Supreme Court. It was a stationary court held at an appointed place. (3) The Subordinate Judges appointed by the Sovereign's authority for local areas and local jurisdictions. From their decisions, appeals used to lie to the Court of the Chief Justice and thereafter to the Privy Council or the King-in-Council. The three different types of popular courts mentioned by Colebrooke are: (1) Assemblage of townsmen or meetings of persons belonging to various tribes and professions, but inhabiting the same place. (2) The court represented by companies of traders or artisans or persons belonging to different tribes, but subsisting by the practice of the same profession. These appear to be Industrial Courts or the Courts of Professions or courts of disciplinary bodies of different professions. (3) The court of kinsmen or relations connected by consanguinity, mainly confined to personal and family laws and customs.

According to Colebrooke, these courts were technically called in Hindu law (1) *pūga*, (2) *śreṇī*, and (3) ***kula***. Their decisions or awards were always subject to revision. The ***kula*** decisions were revisable by the *śreṇi* courts, and the *śreṇī* decisions by the *pūga* courts. From the decision of the *pūga*, an appeal could be made to the Court of the ***prāḍvivāka*** and finally thereafter to the Court of the Sovereign. The Hindu judicial system, therefore, shows a regular hierarchy of courts and appeals with well-defined jurisdictions.

The fourth stage of the development of this system was in the Buddhistic period. Buddhism did not interfere with Hindu law and Hindu usages and customs. This is proved by the very significant fact that Burmese law-books did not only profess to be based on the Code of Manu but they also have actually a great number of rules in common with that great work. Whenever courts in the Buddhistic period found difficulty in administering Hindu law or obtaining the co-operation of the orthodox Brāhmaṇa assessors, attempts were made to prepare some digest or compilation of

Hindu law by the Buddhistic courts. These compilations were naturally free from the more orthodox features of Hindu conservatism. Viśvarūpa's commentary on Yājñavalkya, which was followed by Vijñāneśvara in writing the *Mitākṣarā*, was such a compilation. The *Mitākṣarā* bears a large impress of Buddhistic influence. Similarly, the *Agni Purāṇa* contains evidence of the development of Hindu law during the Buddhistic period. This development may be compared to the growth of Equity in English law. The orthodoxy and stubborn formalism of the more ancient Hindu system were mellowed by rules of fairness and equity, almost in the same manner as equity relieved the rigours of common law in England. A kind of Hindu equity grew up and developed during this fourth stage under Buddhistic influence. The process of humanization and adaptation of law was carried out through the instrumentality of the courts as well as through the new text-books and compilations that appeared in this period.

The fifth stage of Hindu law covers the period of the Mohammedan rule. A true view of the history of the effect of the Muslim period on the Hindu judicial system and Hindu law is that the Mohammedan rulers did not upset either Hindu law or its machinery of administration. They were more concerned with the collection of revenue, and left undisturbed the civil judicial administration of the Hindus, although there was, naturally enough, some encroachment in the sphere of the criminal law administration. Two outstanding events of this period show the great contribution which the Mohammedan rulers made to Hindu law and judicial administration. The first relates to the sixteenth century, when Dalapati, one of the ministers of the well-known Nizam Shāh of Ahmednagar, wrote the stupendous encyclopaedia and digest of Hindu law which was known as *Nṛsiṁha-prasāda*.[36] The second event is the celebrated digest of Hindu law called the *Vyavahāra-saukhya* containing chapters on Civil Procedure and the Law of Evidence compiled by Todarmal, the famous Hindu minister of the Emperor Akbar.[37] The Civil Procedure shows the working of the Hindu judicial system. History records the fact during this Muslim period the State very often took the advice of the Hindu *paṇḍitas* in administering laws relating to the Hindus.

The last phase of the development of the Hindu law and judicial system ends in the British period. The British followed the same policy towards Hindu law as their Muslim and Buddhist predecessors. The personal laws of the Hindus were left untouched by the British, except where they affected the political and fiscal interests of the country. In the early period of the British rule, the personnel of the judiciary, being foreign, always

[36] *Nṛsiṁha-prasāda (Vyavahāra-sāra)*, ed. by V. S. Tillu, Benares, 1934.
[37] *Ṭoḍarānanda*, ed. by P. L. Vaidya. Ganga Oriental Series, Bikaner.

took the advice and opinion of the Hindu *panditas* in deciding questions of Hindu law, but later this practice was discarded as the Indians were gradually taken in as members of the judiciary.

From this brief analysis it will be clear that the current of the Hindu judicial system and administration is an unbroken one ever since the Vedic times, extending over many thousands of years and surviving in spite of many vicissitudes of fortune in the history of the country.

JUDICIAL LEGISLATION THROUGH INTERPRETATION

Although Hindu law was normally considered traditional, and from that point of view could not be altered by direct changes introduced by the State, except only occasionally by precepts of the sovereign, yet law was continually being made by the judges through interpretation according to the famous principles that came to be known as Mīmāṁsā rules of interpretation. One of the greatest contributions of the Hindu judicial system was the development of the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtras or the rules of interpretation. The Kalpa and the Nirukta dealt with questions of interpretation. The Kalpa-Sūtras, although called *prayoga sūtras* (rules of application), undoubtedly served the purpose of rules of interpretation, such, for instance, as the Sūtras of Āśvalāyana, Āpastamba, and others. Mīmāṁsā aphorisms are really associated with *Jaimini Sūtras*, which Bhartṛhari held as being the oldest Sūtras.

The rules of interpretation do not grow in a vacuum, and the historic reason for their origin, growth, and development was provided by the Hindu judicial system, which used rules of interpretation as one of the most powerful instruments for what is known as judicial legislation by decisions in individual cases. Jaimini's book is the first outstanding work of antiquity. In some places, it appears that Jaimini was more analytical than Austin, and more modern than Goodhart, in discovering the real sanction behind the law. The development of such high principles of interpretation would not have been possible in such early times but for the fact that the Hindu judicial system was keen and anxious to interpret the laws and extend them to meet the challenge of changing times.

JUDICIAL PROCEDURE

The procedure of law in the Hindu judicial system was remarkably modern and anticipated the evolution of centuries. How fair and modern it was, will be apparent from a brief and broad study of such procedure.

No civil action could be started without a complaint. Neither the king nor his officers were permitted to foster civil litigation by starting an action without a complaint from a plaintiff. Only a person actually

aggrieved could start an action. Nārada states that if a person who has no concern or who is not interested personally in the litigation institutes any complaint, then he should be punished.[38] That was how vexatious or champertous litigation was avoided. The only exception was made in criminal law, where it was enjoined that the king might and, in fact, should take notice of a crime without a formal plaint.

The complaint in the civil action had to be instituted by petition to the court stating only the barest facts constituting the grievance. The plaintiff's statement was taken down accurately by an officer of the court called the *lekhaka* or writer. Then the judge and such assessors or councillors as there were in the particular court having jurisdiction to deal with the matter, could put any questions that they thought proper in order to elucidate and clarify the complaint. It was provided that the answers made by the complainant or the plaintiff to those questions should be taken into consideration to see whether the complaint disclosed a proper cause of action. It was only when it did so, that a summons was issued through the officer of the court appointed for that purpose who was called the *sādhypāla*.[39] As in the modern age, the Hindu judicial system, even at that time, exempted certain persons, like a soldier on duty or an ambassador or emissaries or persons engaged in public duties, from personal attendance. Disobedience to a summons without excuse was punished with a fine. There was a peculiar sanction by which obedience to a summons was sometimes enforced. This was called *āsedha* or the imposition of legal restraint. The Hindu judicial system developed four kinds of such legal restraints. The first was local. The second was temporary. The third was inhibition from going abroad. The fourth was prevention from pursuit of work or occupation.[40]

When the defendant appeared in obedience to the summons, the plaintiff was again called upon to repeat his complaint in the presence of the defendant. When he did so, it was again taken down, and that corresponds to the modern plaint. On this occasion, the plaintiff had to go into greater details so as to make his allegations specific and definite as regards time, place, object, and the manner in which the cause of action arose.[41] Any serious discrepancy between the complaint as originally preferred and the plaint as finally recorded in the presence of the adversary almost always proved fatal to the cause. This was a special feature of the Hindu judicial

[38] *Nār*., Introd., II. 23 (*SBE*, XXXIII p. 29).
[39] Cf. Vyāsa in *Parāśara Mādhavīya*, III. p. 130; *Vyavahāramayūkha*, p. 5.
[40] For *āsedha*, see *Nār*., Introd., I. 47-54 (*SBE*, XXXIII p. 17f.); *Br. Sm*., I. 159-63 (*GOS*, p. 26); *Kāt*., 103-110.
[41] *Yāj*., II. 6.

system to make the parties come together from the earliest stage long before the actual trial.

RULES OF PLEADINGS

The rules of pleadings were progressive. The plaint was required to be technically precise, comprehensive, direct, unequivocal, consistent, susceptible of proof, concise and yet not deficient in meaning.[42] According to Nārada, amendment of a complaint was permissible, but no amendment was allowed after the plaint was finally taken down in the presence of the adversary.[43] The defendant was allowed to file a defence and could also get reasonable adjournment for putting in his answer. The defence also had to be taken down in the presence of the plaintiff, in pursuance of the principle of confronting the two parties from the earliest stage when they start unfolding their cases. It was the rule that the defence had to be confined to the grounds raised in the plaint, and the answers had to be unhesitating, clear, consistent, free from prolixity, and not obscure.[44] Kātyāyana, describes four forms of defence, viz. (1) confession, (2) denial, (3) special exception, and (4) plea of a former judgement or *res judicata*,[45] which remind one of the most advanced forms of pleading recognized in the modern age. Bṛhaspati's definition of special exception (*pratyavaskandana*, also known as *kāraṇottara*)[46] shows that it was the modern plea of confession and avoidance in the law of pleadings in advanced jurisprudence.

Hārīta defines the plea of *res judicata* (*prāṅ-nyāya* or *pūrva-nyāya*) in defence as being the plea where the defendant avers that the matter in controversy was the subject of a former litigation between him and the plaintiff, and in which the latter was defeated.[47]

Bṛhaspati describes a judicial proceeding as consisting of four different stages: (1) the plaint, (2) the answer, (3) the trial, and (4) the deliberations followed by the decree.[48]

When the answer amounted to an admission of the claim, the decree could follow at once without any further proceeding.

RULES OF TRIAL

It is surprising to find elaborate and technical rules in the Hindu judicial system dealing with the complicated question of the right to begin.

[42] Cf. *Bṛ. Sm.*, II. 14 5 (*GOS*, p. 31).
[43] *Nār.*, Introd , II. 7 (*SBE*, XXXIII p. 27).
[44] *Ibid* , Quotations, III. 2 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p 239).
[45] St 165. Cf. also *Nār* , Introd., II 2 ; *Śukra*, IV. 5. 144.
[46] III. 19 (*GOS*, p. 29).
[47] *Asminnarthe sahānena vādaḥ pūrvamabhūttadā,*
Jito 'yamiti cedbrūyāt prāṅ-nyāyaḥ syāttaduttaram.
[48] II. 1 (*GOS*, p 29).

Normally, this right belonged to the plaintiff. But in cases of confession and avoidance, the defendant had the right to begin. According to Hārīta, the plaintiff led the evidence in cases of denial, while the defendant did in cases of special exception and *res judicata*; no evidence was necessary in cases of admission.[49]

After deciding who has the right to begin at the trial, the party who has the right is called upon to state the evidence by which he proposes to support his case. Yājñavalkya says that a competent surety should be taken from each party for the satisfaction of the judgement if it goes against him.[50] If a party was unable to furnish a competent surety, steps were taken to ensure his attendance during the trial. The procedure anticipated the procedure of courts of the present age calling for security for costs and attendance.

Counter-claims were not usually entertained until the completion of the trial of the original complaint.[51]

Nārada recorded and laid down five rules showing who should lose a case:[52] (1) A person who having his case recorded in one way afterwards sets up a new case, (2) A person who shows his aversion to the trial by refusing to help its progress, (3) A person who fails to appear at the time of the trial, (4) A person who being called upon to answer keeps silent, (5) A person who absconds with a view to avoiding the process of the court.

It was the rule that a litigation once started could not be compromised except with the clear sanction of the court.[53] This again accords with the modern judicial proceeding.

LAW OF EVIDENCE

The Hindu judicial system used a very highly developed law of evidence. Evidence is broadly divided into three classes: (1) documents, (2) witnesses, and (3) conduct. Of conduct, possession was always taken as evidence giving rise to a presumption of title, which was later to be developed by modern jurisprudence. Documents were divided into two classes, the official and the private. Their proof differs in the same way as it does in the modern law of evidence. Custom could be proved both by the evidence of witnesses and by documentary evidence. Interesting descriptions are to be found about the qualities and demeanour of a reliable witness. The test of such a witness was said to be that he should be 'Religious, generous, of a respectable family, devoted to truth, a lover of virtue, candid, and possessed of offspring'.[54] The characteristics of the

[49] I. 29. [50] *Yāj.*, II. 10[cd]. [51] *Ibid.*, II. 9[ab].
[52] *Nār.*, Introd., II. 33 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p. 31f.).
[53] *Bṛ. Sm.*, III. 42 (*GOS*, p. 42). [54] Cf. *Yāj.*, II. 68; *Manu*, VIII. 62-3.

demeanour of an untruthful witness are graphically described thus: 'He constantly shifts his position and licks the corners of his lips, his forehead sweats, his countenance changes colour, his mouth dries up, his speech falters, and he very often contradicts himself. He does not look up, is slow in returning answers, and contorts his lips.'[55] It is difficult to find, even in modern books on the law of evidence, a more graphic description on the demeanour of witnesses with such great precision. While giving his deposition, the witness was placed near both the plaintiff and the defendant. The judge always put the witnesses on their oath and had the right to interrogate them about the case. Distinct forms of ordeal were also prescribed in the law books of the Hindus, but they were to be avoided if other kinds of evidence were forthcoming.[56]

JUDGEMENT

No trial was allowed to be held either behind closed doors or outside jurisdiction or at night, and any trial so held was declared to be void and liable to be annulled. This anticipates the modern law that a judicial trial should normally be open to the public and should be attended with publicity.

The decree of the court always followed the end of the trial. Time was taken for consideration of the judgement. The judgement embodied the decision of the court, called either the *vidhāna* or the *jayapatra*. It was required to contain (a) a summary of the pleadings, (b) evidence adduced by the parties, (c) the court's deliberation thereon, and (d) the law applicable to the case as determined by the court.[57] A judicial pronouncement in the modern age contains no more. It bore the signature of the judge and the mark of the royal seal.

CRIMINAL LAW: DOCTRINE OF EQUALITY

No account of the Hindu judicial system can be even reasonably complete without some reference to the theory and procedure of Criminal Law evolved and adopted by that system.

There was equality before the law. No one was exempted from punishment. Even a relation of the king could not avoid punishment. if he was guilty of an offence. Yājñavalkya says that no one who has transgressed the law is exempted from punishment, be he the king, or a brother, a son, an object of worship, a father-in-law, or a maternal uncle.[58]

This doctrine of equality of the law for all was, in fact, carried to the

[55] *Yāj.*, II 13 5 ; *Nār.*, I 193 7 (*SBE*, XXXIII. p. 90f)
[56] *Yāj.*, II. 22 , *Bṛ Sm* . VII 52 (*GOS*, p 97).
[57] *Bṛ. Sm.*, VI. 26-7 (*GOS*, p. 64).
[58] I 358.

opposite extreme. If persons of a responsible position and social status and officers in the administration committed an offence, they had to suffer punishment higher than that of an ordinary citizen committing the same offence. In fact, Manu in one of his well-known verses declares that where an ordinary man is punishable with a fine of one *kārṣāpaṇa*, the king himself committing the offence should be punished a thousand times the amount.[59] This doctrine was applied uniformly, and a person belonging to a higher caste was subjected to a heavier punishment than a person belonging to a lower caste found guilty of the same offence. The principle then was, the greater the position and authority, the greater were the responsibility and the standard of behaviour expected.

PUNISHMENT: CRITERIA AND PURPOSE

Punishments in criminal law under the Hindu judicial system were carefully graded. Yājñavalkya describes four kinds of punishment in criminal law, namely: (1) Censure, (2) Rebuke, (3) Pecuniary punishment, and (4) Corporal punishment. They could be used separately or jointly, according to the nature and circumstances of the crime.[60]

Pecuniary punishment included fine and forfeiture of property. Corporal punishment included imprisonment, penal servitude, and death sentence.

The Hindu judicial system developed a number of rules and standards as guides for inflicting the right punishment and the right sentence. The place and time of the offence, the age, occupation, strength, and position of the offender, the circumstances in which the offence was committed, the intention, and the value of the articles stolen or robbed, were all said to be proper considerations to determine the sentence and the punishment. Whether the offence was the first offence or a repetition was also a consideration in sentencing the offender.[61]

The object of punishment was always kept in view in the administration of criminal law. According to Manu, one of the primary objects of punishment is protection of the people. He says: 'Penalty (*daṇḍa*) keeps the people under control, penalty protects, penalty remains awake when people are asleep; so the wise have regarded punishment as a *dharma* leading to righteousness.'[62] This appears to indicate that punishment was regarded not only as a deterrent but also as retributive and reformative.[63]

The Hindu judicial system offers a rich field of research. It promises

[59] VII. 336 [60] *Yāj*., I. 367
[61] *Ibid*., I. 368 · II. 275, cf *Manu*, VII 16; VIII. 126.
[62] *Manu*, VII. 18.
[63] Reference to the criminal procedure followed by the Hindu judicial system can also be found in *Mbh*., XII. 107., 27.

rewards which are not merely historic and antiquarian, but offers models and inspirations for progress and development towards the goal of a fairer jurisprudence and the ultimate object of ideal justice through human agencies.

PART V

ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA, NĪTI-ŚĀSTRA, AND OTHER SOURCES OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

27

A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE OF ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA AND NĪTI-ŚĀSTRA

I

THE EARLY SCHOOLS AND AUTHORS OF ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA

ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA is defined by Kauṭilya, the last and greatest master of the science, as the branch of knowledge which deals with the acquisition and preservation of dominion. It is held, in other words, to comprise the art of government in the widest sense of the term. This definition is justified by the list of contents of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*—a work produced probably in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. and the only surviving one of its class. The list comprises the branches of internal and foreign administration, civil and criminal law as well as the art of warfare. As regards the term Nīti-śāstra, it is used in the narrow sense of the science of polity as well as in the wider significance of the science of general morals.

From a number of quotations and references in later works we learn that there arose (probably in the fourth century before Christ) no less than four distinct schools and thirteen individual teachers of Artha-śāstra. The loss of this fairly extensive literature is to be attributed to its supersession by the masterly treatise of Kauṭilya, which itself has been recovered from the oblivion of centuries by the fortunate discovery of a complete manuscript of the work and its publication by R. Shama Sastry in 1908. Among the old masters of the science special mention should be made of those of the schools of Manu, Bṛhaspati, and Uśanas (Śukra), and the two teachers Viśālākṣa and Bhāradvāja, who are singled out for salutation and are quoted by later writers in different branches of learning.

The discussions of the ancient Artha-śāstra authorities are centred in the first place upon a few basic concepts and categories. Such are the categories of the seven constituents of the State, the four traditional sciences (*vidyās*), the four political expedients (*upāyas*), and the six types of foreign policy (*guṇas*) as well as the concepts of the State-system (*maṇḍala*) and the king's coercive authority (*daṇḍa*). The early Artha-śāstra masters themselves, as we learn from Kauṭilya's quotations, deal with such items as the scheme of the prince's education (based upon a comparative estimate of 'the four sciences'); the recruitment and selection of the ministers and the constitution of the ministerial council; the policy of a

king's security against his sons, and that of a minister in the crisis of the king's death; the application of the king's coercive authority; civil and criminal law; the characteristics of the State structure (founded upon a comparative estimate of the calamities of the constituent elements thereof); and the policies of the inter-State relations, in particular, those of attacking the enemy, waging offensive and defensive wars, and application of different sub-types of treaties.

II

THE ARTHAŚĀSTRA OF KAUṬILYA

In Kauṭilya's political nomenclature, a king's provision of security and prosperity (*yoga kṣema*) for his own people is conveyed by the technical term *tantra*, and his arrangement for keeping watch over the neighbouring rulers is expressed by another technical term *āvāpa*; and as such Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* consists of two great divisions, the *tantra* portion comprising the first five Books (*adhikaraṇas*), which are divided into ninety-four sub-sections (*prakaraṇas*), and the *āvāpa* portion consisting of the next nine Books, which are divided into eighty-four sub-sections. The fifteenth Book consisting of a single *prakaraṇa* may be regarded as somewhat outside the two divisions of *tantra* and *āvāpa*. An attempt will now be made to give a brief summary of the topics discussed by Kauṭilya under the above fifteen Books or *adhikaraṇas*.

Book One deals with the discipline and education of a king. He must be conversant with the knowledge of all the four *vidyās* (branches of learning), viz. *ānvīkṣiki* (metaphysics), *trayī* (the three Vedas, of course, including the fourth or *Atharva-Veda*, and also the Itihāsa-Veda and the six Vedāṅgas), *vārtā* (signifying pastoral pursuits, trade, industry, and commerce, i.e. economics), and *daṇḍanīti* (the science of polity or government). The whole of Kauṭilya's theory of polity is based on the proper and peaceful performance of the assigned duties of the four *varṇas* (castes) and the four *āśramas* (stages of human life). Kauṭilya states that a king who is severe in repression becomes a terror to his people, and one who is mild in the award of punishment is treated by them with contempt, while he who awards punishment as deserved is respected. So he thinks that *daṇḍa* should be awarded after full and just consideration, and it must not be awarded wrongly, nor allowed to remain in abeyance; for, in this case, it will produce the condition of *mātsya-nyāya* or anarchy. On proper discipline and education of the king under experts and specialists depends his power of awarding *daṇḍa*. Unrivalled suzerainty can only be attained by a fully disciplined and educated monarch. The king is trained to control

the six internal enemies, viz. lust, anger, greed, vanity, arrogance, and jealousy. Kauṭilya next discusses fully[1] the institution of ministership, the necessity for creating ministers, their appointment according to their requisite qualifications, and the test of their honesty and loyalty by a method called *upadhā* (allurement). The *buddhisacivas* or *matisacivas*, i.e. *mantrins* (counsellors and policy-makers), according to Kauṭilya, are more important than the *karmasacivas* or *amātyas* (executive functionaries and departmental heads).

Premising that deliberations (*mantra*) come first and administrative undertakings (*ārambha*) next, Kauṭilya refutes[2] the views of some of the earlier teachers on the question of the adequate number of *mantrins*, which, according to him, should not exceed three or four. But he does not restrict the number of *amātyas* or *karmasacivas*, who constitute the so-called *mantri-pariṣad* (the council of ministers). In matters of grave importance, Kauṭilya continues, all the *buddhisacivas* and *karmasacivas* should be convened together in a joint session, and the king should do what the majority decides: he should accept even the verdict of the minority, if it is deemed necessary and conducive to the object in view.

Kauṭilya's statecraft is mainly based on an efficient system of espionage. In the *Arthaśāstra* we find several classes of spies; the two main groups being the *saṁsthas* and the *sañcārins*, the operation of the former being chiefly static and that of the latter mostly dynamic. These different types of spies should have a network of assistant workers and disciples having their sub-workers and sub-disciples for carrying on their secret business. The high State functionaries, including even the *mantrins*, were subject to their vigilance. The most interesting type of spies is the one called *ubhayavetana*, who was allowed by his own king to accept surreptitiously salary from his enemy, while engaged in collecting information about the latter's kingdom. The topic of espionage leads Kauṭilya to describe how a king should deal both with the groups of discontented, factious, ambitious, haughty, alarmed, and provoked persons in his own and the enemy's kingdom, and the princes of his household. Illustrating the manner in which detractors of the monarch should be silenced by the activities of spies, Kauṭilya advises them to tell the people assembled in the course of a public discussion how in the old days Manu, 'son of the Sun', was elected the first king by the folk suffering from anarchy; how in lieu of their offer of one-sixth of the grain produce, one-tenth of their manufactured articles, and even cash money, Manu undertook the responsibility of maintaining security of people's life and property; how even the anchorites

[1] *Kauṭ.*, I. 8-10.

[2] *Ibid.*, I. 15.

offered the king one-sixth of their gleaned grains; and how the king was to be the dispenser of rewards (as representing the God Indra) and punishments (as representing the God Yama); and how therefore the king should never be despised.

In the next place, a ruler is enjoined by Kauṭilya to keep a vigilant eye on the princes possessing, we are told, the characteristics of crabs who eat up their begetter. Observing that a royal family having no well-trained and well-disciplined prince perishes like a worm-eaten piece of wood, Kauṭilya advises the king to leave aside the wicked and untrained princes and to appoint instead of them a prince, whether or not the eldest, possessing the requisite princely virtues to the office of the commander-in-chief or of the heir-apparent. He should never install on the throne a wicked son, though he be the only son. Generally but not necessarily, the eldest son should succeed to the sovereignty in circumstances other than dangerous. Kauṭilya even recommends a joint-family sovereignty (if the need arises) on account of its invincibility.

Describing next the king's daily routine, the author of the *Arthaśāstra* directs that the king must at once attend to all urgent calls of business and not put them off; for, when postponed, they may prove too difficult or even impossible to accomplish. Readiness for action is described as a religious vow for a king, and the root of all royal business is his enterprise. A king's happiness and welfare, it is said, depend on those of his subjects. The book concludes with an account of the precautions that are to be taken for the safety of the king's person in his household.

Book Two of the *Arthaśāstra* is a veritable mine of information about the running of a bureaucratic system of government in an ancient Indian State. Only a few important features of governmental work carried on by this vast and heavy bureaucracy are briefly noted here. While describing the king's method of distribution of land under colonization to the cultivators, the author advises that certain lands should be granted revenue-free and perpetually to specified classes of Brāhmaṇas,[3] and that other lands, both arable and fallow, should be distributed to farmers only as life-tenants. By contrast, the king is forbidden by Kauṭilya to take away fallow land from those to whom it is given for bringing it under cultivation; and he is further enjoined to grant special privileges, immunities, and remissions to the cultivators, keeping, of course, an eye on the condition of his treasury.

While constructing a fort or a fortified town, the king is advised to arrange for storage of all kinds of oils, grains, sugar, salt, medicines, dry vegetables, fodder, dry fish, hay-stacks, firewood, metals, skins, charcoal,

[3] Cf *bhūmichidra-vidhāna* in *Kauṭ.*, II. 2.

tendons, poison, horns, bamboo, barks of trees, strong timber, weapons, and armour which may last for many years. The Chief Treasury Officer (*sannidhātā*) has charge of treasuries, warehouses, storehouses, godowns, arsenals, and prisons. The Chief Revenue Officer (*samāhartā*) deals with the collection of revenue from the seven sources, viz. (1) forts and fortified towns, (2) the countryside, (3) mines, (4) cultivated fields and flower and fruit gardens, (5) forests, (6) pens of domestic animals, and (7) traffic-routes. He is in charge of all these heads of revenue and those of expenditure, i.e. of all budgetary affairs. The king is directed by Kauṭilya to examine constantly the character of all departmental heads (*adhyakṣas*) and their subordinates, such as accountants (*saṁkhyāyaka*), writers or clerks (*lekhaka*), and coin-examiners (*rūpa-darśaka*). It is further laid down that no chief officer should be allowed to hold his office permanently. Stating that it is hardly possible for officers directly dealing with government finance and revenue not to enjoy even slightly the taste of State money, Kauṭilya prescribes measures against corruption. Traffic in salt being a State monopoly, imported salt is highly taxed in Kauṭilya's system, and adulteration of salt is punishable. For the protection of the community, the king should never allow import of useless and harmful commodities from foreign countries ; but he should permit, without toll or customs duties, import of goods beneficial to the people and grain seeds not otherwise easily available in the country. Sale of commodities at the places (fields or factories) of their production is prohibited. The concluding portion of the book deals with the administration of cities under City Mayors (*nāgarikas*), of which we may mention some principal features. The *nāgarika* and his staff, it is said, should prepare registers of municipal holdings. Managers of charity houses should note the arrival and departure of heretics and travellers. Keepers of hotels, restaurants, and brothels should only entertain men of attested identity. Physicians, landlords, and householders are to report to the city officers about the diseases of the patients, the nature of the tenants, and the arrival and departure of strangers respectively. Townspeople are to provide themselves with fire-extinguishing instruments and vessels filled with water. Dead bodies of human beings are to be taken out for cremation or burial through particular city-gates. The *nāgarika* is to report to the king on nocturnal crimes committed in the city. General gaol deliveries should be provided for on the occasion of the king's conquest of a new territory, the installation of the crown prince, and the birth of a prince. Those among the prisoners who are very young, old, diseased or helpless are to be released on the days of the king's birth anniversary and on full-moon days.

Book Three (*Dharmasthīya*) of the *Arthaśāstra* deals with the branch

of civil law. The king is regarded as the final authority in judicial matters He is assisted in arriving at legal decisions by a triad of judges (*dharmasthas*), who actually try lawsuits in the company of some specialists in legal Śāstras (*vyavahāra*). The author further describes the legal processes regarding statements of the plaintiffs and rejoinders of the respondents. The heads of law relate to marriage (including the different kinds of marriage, the question of proper and improper marital relations, widow remarriage, remarriage of males, dowry, divorce, etc.), inheritance and partition of ancestral property (including a discussion of different kinds of sonship), holdings, fulfilment of contracts, debts, deposits, pledges and mortgages, slaves and free labourers, partnership, revocation of sale and purchase, rescission of gifts, sale without ownership, and relation between property and its owner. In Kauṭilya's legal system, a girl of twelve and a boy of sixteen are treated as having attained majority. Regarding the law of divorce or dissolution of marriage, Kauṭilya rules that marriages contracted in accordance with the customs of the *brāhma*, *prājāpatya*, *ārṣa*, and *daiva* forms cannot be dissolved. Slavery is allowed in Kauṭilya's system under certain legal restrictions. It is no crime for the Mlecchas (non-Aryans) to sell or mortgage their own offspring, but an Aryan cannot be enslaved. The principle recommended by Kauṭilya for the guidance of guilds or unions of workmen and those who carry on co-operative work is that they should either divide their earnings according to the terms agreed upon, or in equal shares. Some topics of the law of crimes, such as violence, slander, assault, dicing, gambling with animals, are also dealt with in this context. In the cases of slander and assault, theft, violence, and abduction, even hermits and ascetics are not immune from the penalties of law.

Book Four named *Kaṇṭaka-śodhana* (removal of thorns or anti-social elements), deals with a number of miscellaneous topics. Those relate to: public protection against deceitful and fraudulent artisans and merchants; penalty for manufacturing counterfeit coins and for disturbing the currency; fraud in respect of weights and measures; remedies against providential calamities, e.g. fire, flood, epidemics, and famine; protection from the acts of evil-doers living by secret and foul ways; seizure of criminals on suspicion, along with the stolen property, or in the act of theft, *post mortem* examination in the case of sudden deaths; eliciting confession from suspects by questionings or physical tortures; protection of the people from the oppressions of government servants; ransom or fine in lieu of mutilation of limbs of criminals, when ordered by the court; death-penalty with or without torture; outrage on girls; and punishment for transgression of social obligations. The high functionaries who try criminal cases are called *pradeṣṭṛs*, and they are assisted in the trial by a tribunal or bench of three

experts. In Kauṭilya's penal code, no Brāhmaṇa could be tortured for any criminal offence, nor could he be awarded the death-penalty: all that could be done in the case of an offending Brāhmaṇa is that he was to be branded with a mark on his forehead for his criminality and banished from the country. On the other hand, Kauṭilya does not make the king immune from punishment for violation of justice.

Among the topics discussed in Book Five of the *Arthaśāstra* are included the following: Secret measures against seditious ministers; replenishment of State coffers in a financial emergency; emoluments for the royal *entourage* and other government servants; behaviour of the king's dependants towards him; consolidation of the kingdom after the sovereign's demise and similar catastrophes; and establishment of sovereignty of the single son of a king after his death. A few points under the above heads may be noted. A king may, in the interest of righteousness, inflict secret punishment even on his favourite courtiers and country chiefs. A king of attenuated treasury may collect money from the people even by unfair and despotic methods, such as the levy of benevolences (*praṇaya*). But such demands for money should be made only once. Various pretexts for collection of money during financial stringency are also permitted. Kauṭilya, however, enjoins that only the wicked men and never the innocent should be victimized for such purpose. He rejects the view of Bhāradvāja, who advises the minister to usurp the throne after his master's death. He declares instead that hereditary kingship in the single line of rulers should be preserved, since usurpation of the throne by the minister cannot be a righteous act, and it may also lead to popular fury. The minister should make even a wicked prince succeed to the throne, while asking the other ministers and members of the royal family to regard the new king as only a flag under which they themselves would be the real rulers.

The essential characteristics of the seven constituent elements of the State are first described in Book Six. Reference is then made to the six political expedients (*guṇas*), viz. peace (*sandhi*), war (*vigraha*), expedition (*yāna*), neutrality or halt (*āsana*), dubious attitude (*dvaidhībhāva*), i.e. peace with one and war with another, and alliance (*saṁśraya*). According as a king deals carefully or doubtfully or carelessly with these expedients, he attains the condition of augmentation (*vṛddhi*), stagnation (*sthāna*) or deterioration (*kṣaya*) of his dominion. The author next defines the twelve constituents of the circle of states (*maṇḍala*), viz. the *vijigīṣu* or the would-be conqueror (in the centre), his immediate neighbour regarded as an enemy, the would-be conqueror's friend, the enemy's friend, the friend's friend, and the enemy's friend's friend (the last five being in front); the rearward enemy, the rearward friend, the ally of rearward enemy, and the ally of

rearward friend (the last four being in the rear); the mediatory king and the most powerful neutral king. Kauṭilya next defines the three kinds of power (*śakti*) of a king, namely, the power of deliberation, the power due to treasury and the army, and the power of energy, and their corresponding successes.

Proper utilization of the six political expedients in the field of diplomacy is discussed in Book Seven of the *Arthaśāstra*. The king, we read, should strive intently to pass from the state of deterioration to that of stagnation and gradually therefrom to augmentation through an intelligent application of the six expedients. According to Kauṭilya, a king should always prefer peace to war in consideration of the immense disadvantages involved in waging war against an enemy, for war leads to wastage of human life, enormous expenses of money, sojourning in distant and strange lands, perpetration of cruel acts, etc. In case the *vijigīṣu* feels himself inferior to his enemy, he should try to enter into any one of the various *sandhis* described in this treatise. A king may march against an enemy in combination with his allies of superior, equal, or inferior status by agreeing upon his share of the spoils of war. The destruction of an enemy must be undertaken in an open fight even at a heavy loss of men and money.

A lively discussion on the several kinds of *vyasanas* (dangers or calamities) befalling a king and his kingdom both from within and without is the subject of Book Eight. A *vijigīṣu* is to consider them with respect to his own kingdom and that of his enemy. Kauṭilya endorses his teacher's view on the seriousness of the dangers to the seven constituent elements of the State in the following descending order: the king, the ministers, the country people, the fort (and fortified towns), the treasury, the army, and allies. To remove internal troubles caused by the *amātya* (minister), the king should keep the treasury and the army under his own control. Want of proper education and discipline is the cause of a king's vices due to anger and passion. The king is to guard against and provide for providential calamities, such as fire, flood, epidemics, and pestilence. A king is advised by Kauṭilya to avert financial troubles in the interest of the prosperity of his people.

The topic of leading an expedition by a *vijigīṣu* is dealt with in Book Nine. Before launching an invasion, a king should carefully weigh his own strength and weakness with those of his enemy. He should also consider the measure of his three *śaktis*, the place and time for his march, recruitment of forces, possible troubles in the rear, loss of men and money, ultimate gain expected, and internal and external dangers that are likely to be encountered. Kauṭilya next describes the proper time for the enlistment of the six kinds of infantry: hereditary troops, mercenary troops,

troops raised from corporate bodies, received from the allies, troops seduced from the enemy, and those enlisted from forest tribes. Kauṭilya thinks that though the Kṣatriya army is better than the Brāhmaṇa one, which can be won over by prostration, the Vaiśya and Śūdra armies consist of very virile men, and they can be obtained in larger numbers. Before starting on an expedition. Kauṭilya is of opinion that success eludes the fool who consults possible internal and external troubles that may arise during his absence from his capital. A king undertaking a march should carefully weigh the profits likely to accrue therefrom and beware of the impediments to his expedition. Kauṭilya is of opinion that success eludes the fool who consults the stars too much. He next describes the methods of encompassing the death of seditious and hostile subjects. This is followed by an account of the use of strategic measures for averting all other kinds of political dangers, and a description of the remedies against providential visitations.

Book Ten concerns itself with war. During the king's absence in camp, the officer in charge of the capital city should strictly enforce the passport system so as to arrest armed men going out without writ. The king should protect his own army by all possible means during its march through difficult and dangerous paths, the soldiers being required to be looked after when afflicted by disease and pestilence or in any other emergency. Kauṭilya advocates treacherous fight if the *vijigīṣu* fails to cope with his enemy in a fair fight. Other topics treated by him relate to grounds suitable for deploying the elephants, the horses, the chariots, and men, and the formation of various kinds of array on the wings and in the front. The services of unarmed labourers (*viṣṭis*) were to be requisitioned for examining camps, roads, bridges, wells, and river crossings for carrying machines, weapons, armours, food, and other paraphernalia, and for removing the wounded from the battle-field. All sorts of secret contrivances were to be laid under contribution; for example, the use of bravoes and traitors; setting fire to the enemy's camp; false announcement of burning down of the enemy's fort or of rebellion in the enemy's family or elsewhere. The author says, 'The arrow shot by an archer may or may not kill even a single man, but the sharp intellect applied by a wise man can kill those lying in the mother's womb.'[4]

Book Eleven deals with economic guilds and political corporations in the shape of tribal republics, both being called by the generic title of *saṅgha*. The king is advised to acquire military aid from these *saṅghas* since they are invincible on account of their corporate unity. A *vijigīṣu* is enjoined to secure the services of the *saṅghas* by a careful application of the methods

[4] *Kauṭ.*, X. 6.

of conciliation and bribery, if they are favourably disposed towards him, and by those of dissension and punishment, if they are opposed to him. The seeds of dissension are to be sown among the hostile leaders of *saṅghas*, and they are to be won over by engaging the services of beautiful women as spies.

Book Twelve describes the various Machiavellian contrivances which a weak *vijigīṣu* should use in fighting against a stronger one. When attacked by the latter, the former, it is observed, should either take shelter under a third superior king or resort to an impregnable fort. Aggressors are generally of three varieties: One contented with the surrender of the vanquished, one contented with the acquisition of his territory and wealth, and one seeking not only his territory, treasure, sons, and wife, but also his life. The battle of intrigue is to be adopted by the weaker king against the stronger invader by producing internal disturbances through the agency of spies. Secret methods are to be applied against the high State functionaries, princes, and chief army officers of the aggressor. Destruction of his stores and granaries is also recommended. The weak *vijigīṣu* may encompass the death of his enemy when entering the precincts of a temple for offering worship. The strong enemy should be made to accept, through a pretended friend belonging to the weak king's camp, a supply of poisoned food for use in his own capital city. How the weak king should achieve 'triumphant success' by bringing about the death of the stronger enemy by 'secret methods' is told at the end of the book.

In Book Thirteen we are first told how a *vijigīṣu* should sow seeds of dissension in the enemy's country before attempting to seize it; how in that act he should strive to enthuse his own men and frighten the men of his enemy by the proclamation of his own omniscience and his association with divinities; and how he should entice the enemy to come out with his entire family and his ministers to visit an improvised ascetic, and bring about his assassination at the time of the visit. Then follows a description of the *vijigīṣu's modus operandi* for besieging and storming the enemy's fort, which is made to serve as the pattern of the four steps to his attainment of the position of an imperial suzerain. The new conqueror should enjoy the fruits of his conquest by following the duties prescribed for a king, and seeing that the proper division of castes (*varṇas*) and stages of life (*āśramas*) is strictly adhered to by the people. A *vijigīṣu* should consolidate his new position by the creation of confidence in the mind of the conquered people. He should cover his enemy's vices by his own virtues and the enemy's virtues by doubling his own. He should bestow favours, remit dues, distribute gifts, and confer honours on the people conquered. A new conqueror should adopt the same mode of life, dress, language, and customs

as those of the conquered people; he should show devotion to the local deities, and follow the festivities, convivial assemblies, and amusements of those people; he should award land grants, gifts of other properties, and immunity from taxation to learned men, orators, and religious people. He should introduce righteous customs and order full gaol-deliveries.

In Book Fourteen Kauṭilya deals with certain recipes for the destruction of a king's enemies and for causing in them blindness, insanity, and various kinds of bodily diseases and deformities. Among these delusive devices are found certain medical formulas for making a man invisible to his enemies and providing him with the power of vision in night's darkness. Incantations are to be uttered for causing men and animals to fall asleep. Remedies are to be used against the application of poisons and poisonous drugs by the enemy to the king's own troops.

Book Fifteen gives the plan of the entire work. *Arthaśāstra* is defined by the author as 'the science which treats of the means of acquiring and ruling the earth'.[5] This is followed by an explanation of thirty-two technical terms used by him in his work. In the concluding verses he says that this *śāstra* establishes and maintains the triad, viz. virtue, wealth, and pleasure (*dharma, artha,* and *kāma*), and sets down unrighteous acts detrimental to wealth (*artha*).

III

KĀMANDAKĪYA-NĪTISĀRA

This treatise, belonging to the third century A.D., is based mainly on Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. In fact Kāmandaka, at the beginning of his work, acknowledges Viṣṇugupta (i.e. Cāṇakya or Kauṭilya) as his master and eulogizes him as the creator of the science of polity who has drawn from the great ocean of Artha-śāstra the nectar of *Nītisāra*.[6] This book is composed in an epic form, and old commentators regard it as a great *kāvya*.

Kāmandaka's *Nītisāra* or the Essence of Polity consists of twenty cantos and thirty-six sub-sections (*prakaraṇas*) on special topics. A summarized list of its contents is given below. Canto One: Subjugation of the senses and discipline under elderly teachers. Canto Two: Divisions of the branches of learning; establishment of the four castes and the four stages of life; and benefits of (the king's application) of punishment. Canto Three: Establishment of the rules of conduct. Canto Four: Perfection of the seven constituent elements of the State. Canto Five: The

[5] *Ibid*., XV. 1

[6] *Kām*., I. 2-6.

behaviour of the king and his dependants. Canto Six: Removal of the unsocial elements. Canto Seven: Security against the princes; and the king's self-protection. Canto Eight: Requisites of a king's *maṇḍala* or circle of sovereign States; and conduct of that circle. Canto Nine: Various kinds of treaties. Canto Ten: Different kinds of hostilities. Canto Eleven: Various kinds of expedition, neutrality, duplicity, and seeking the protection of allies. Canto Twelve: Deliberation over policies. Canto Thirteen: The institution of envoys, and the movements of ambassadors and spies. Canto Fourteen: The glory of strenuous effort, and the operations and aflictions of the constituent elements of the State. Canto Fifteen: The category of seven vices. Canto Sixteen: Expeditions; and the nature of aggressors. Canto Seventeen: Encampment of the army. Canto Eighteen: The category of four political expedients. Canto Nineteen: Examination of the strength and weakness of various divisions of the army; the duties of the commanders of the armies; security of the army during expeditions; and different kinds of treacherous warfare. Canto Twenty: The employment of elephants, cavalry, chariots, and infantry, proper locations for deploying them; award of prizes to the troops; various kinds of battle arrays; and righteous warfare.

It may easily be realized from the above summary of contents that Kamandaka is very indebted to Kauṭilya for his subjects. But he has omitted almost everything that is concerned with the actual reality of life in a State, such as administration, control of trade and commerce, and the administration of justice- in fact, those very things which impart to Kauṭilya's book an incomparable value in people's eyes. Kāmandaka does not go much beyond the general maxims of *nīti*. His book often delights in didactive maxims, which appear to be absent in Kauṭilya's treatise.

IV

NITIVĀKYĀMṚTAM OF SOMADEVASŪRI

The *Nītivākyāmṛtam* or the Nectar of the Science of Polity, an interesting treatise on statecraft, was written in A.D. 959 by the Jain scholar Somadeva, the author of the romance *Yaśastilaka*, in which also his vast knowledge of political science is in evidence. The work cited above consists of thirty-two discourses dealing with religious practices (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), coveted worldly objects (*kāma*), the six internal enemies (*arisaḍvarga*), teachers of different lores (*vidyā-vṛddha*), metaphysics (*ānvīkṣikī*), the Vedas (*trayī*), agriculture, cattle breeding, trade (*vārtā*), the science of politics (*daṇḍanīti*), counsellors (*mantrin*), royal priests (*purohita*),

the commander of the army (*senāpati*), ambassadors (*dūta*), spies (*cāra*), power of discrimination (*vicāra*), vices (*vyasana*), the king (*svāmin*), ministers (*amātya*), the countryside and its people (*janapada*), forts (*durga*), the treasury (*kośa*), the army (*bala*), friends and allies (*mitra*), protection of the king (*rājarakṣā*), daily duties of the king (*divasānuṣṭhāna*), good conduct of a king (*sadācāra*), good behaviour of the people (*vyavahāra*), disputes (*vivāda*), the six types of foreign policy (*ṣaḍguṇya*), warfare (*yuddha*), marriages (*vivāha*), and miscellaneous items (*prakīrṇaka*).

Somadeva based his work mostly on the discussions of the topics in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. But he takes more interest in moral maxims than in administrative and military matters, for he is anxious to teach all rulers how they should behave with their people. While accepting the Brāhmaṇical *varṇāśrama* ideal as in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and other Nīti-śāstra, the Jain author prescribes the tenets of materialistic philosophy for kings, for whom ascetic practices are unbecoming. The pithy sayings of Somadeva are couched in simple Sanskrit written in a clear and lucid style.

V

ŚUKRA-NĪTISĀRA

In the beginning of the book it is stated that Śukra himself compiled it, in an abridged manner, out of a ponderous load of earlier Nīti-śāstra matter. Internal evidence leads us to believe that the treatise may have been composed in its present form during the early mediaeval period of Indian history. The whole treatise consists of four chapters, of which the last has seven sub-sections (*prakaraṇas*). The first chapter deals with the duties and functions of princes, the second with the functions of the crown prince and other state dignitaries, and the third with general rules of morality meant to be observed by the king and his men. The first *prakaraṇa* of the fourth chapter is concerned with the characteristics of the king's friends or allies, the second with the royal treasure, the third with arts and sciences, the fourth with customs and institutions, the fifth with the king's duties and functions, the sixth with forts, and the seventh with the soldiery. The book consists of both political and non-political portions, as can be ascertained from the above list of its contents.

The political part of the book deals with the State council, ministers, trade and commerce, public finance, jurisprudence, and international law. The non-political part comprises data for architecture, sculpture, and painting; manners and morals, pedagogy (including *vidyās* or different

branches of learning, *kalās* or the fine arts, and literature); and economics (including statistics, prices, and wages). Hence it may be said that the *Śukra-Nītisāra* is a socio-political and socio-economic work. It combines in itself the most salient features of Artha-śāstra and Dharma-śāstra, and even of Kāma-śāstra, to the exclusion of Mokṣa-śāstra.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: THE MONARCHICAL STATES

I. THE VEDIC PERIOD (c. 1500-700 B.C.)[1]

IN the oldest period of their history, namely, that of the *Ṛg-Veda*, the Vedic Aryans, then in occupation of the north-eastern fringe of the Iranian tableland and the land of the five rivers immediately to its east, were divided into a number of tribes (*janas*). Each tribe consisted of a number of clans (*viśas*, in the narrower sense of the term), who were further subdivided into families (*kulas*). When subsequently during the period of the Yajus Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, the Aryans expanded eastwards along the course of the Gaṅgā and probably also southwards across the Malwa tableland to the Narmada and beyond, the small tribal groups were merged in larger units of the Folk, and what is more, there emerged (at least among the more advanced peoples) a new type of polity, namely, the territorial State. A further development was marked by the rise of overlordships, which, fleeting and transitory as they doubtless were, anticipated the principal types of empire known to later times. Accompanying these political changes, there arose a new pattern of social structure which was based on the well-known division into four castes (*varṇas*), namely, Brāhmaṇas, Rājanyas (or Kṣatriyas), Vaiśyas, and Śūdras.

The Vedic kingship was associated from the first with high dignity, prosperity, and authority. Reference is made to the king's quasi-divinity by means of single epithets or short descriptions in the older Vedic Saṁhitās,[2] and this conception of divinity is developed in the Yajus Saṁhitas into the doctrine of the king's association, or even identification, with the gods, either by means of the omnipotent sacrifice or independently of it. But the king had no claim to divine descent, his human parentage being

[1] The subject of ancient Indian political organization has been treated by many scholars, both Indian and foreign. The more important works are *The State in Ancient India* by Beni Prasad, *Hindu Polity* (3rd Ed.) by K. P. Jayaswal, and *State and Government in Ancient India* (3rd Ed.) by A. S. Altekar. For a complete critical account of the Vedic polity see *A History of Hindu Public Life* by U. N. Ghoshal, Part I, Calcutta (1945). Among the special studies may be mentioned *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (2nd Ed.) by R. C. Majumdar and *Local Government in Ancient India* (2nd Ed.) by Radha Kumud Mookerji. Chs. on administration occur in *The Nandas and the Mauryas* (ed. by K. A. N. Sastri), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vols. I-V (ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker), *The Gupta-Vākāṭaka Age* (ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar); *A Comprehensive History of India*, II (ed. by K. A. N. Sastri), and in various regional and dynastic histories too numerous to mention. The summary given in this section is based on my *A History of Hindu Public Life*, Part I. The status of the Vedic king and the constitution and functions of the popular Assemblies of the Vedic period are further discussed by me in Chapters X and XI of my work *Studies in Ancient History and Culture*, Calcutta (1957).

[2] *Ṛ.V.*, IV. 42. 8-9; *A.V.*, IV. 22.7; VI. 86.3.



prominently mentioned even in the solemn ritual texts of his consecration ceremonies. From the evidence of the texts, which becomes more direct and positive in the later works, we can infer that the king combined in himself the highest executive, judicial, and military functions, especial stress being laid on his possession of criminal jurisdiction and his guardianship of the sacred law.

The rudiments of administrative machinery, retaining to the end more or less traces of 'the household system', go back to the Vedic Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. Like his divine prototype Varuṇa, the king undertook the detection and suppression of crimes through the agency of spies. He claimed from an early period contributions from his subjects, probably in the form of a share of the agricultural produce and the livestock belonging to the villagers, and this must have involved an agency for collection of the same. The texts mention a number of officials under separate designations, but their functions are imperfectly known. The officials occupied a conspicuous place in the royal court. The *sūta* (court minstrel and herald) and the *grāmaṇī* (village headman, but probably at first a mere troop-leader) are included, at least from the time of the *Atharva-Veda*, in a class of 'non-royal king-makers' ranking immediately below the *rājanyas* (princes and nobles), who are called 'the royal king-makers'. The representative *sūta* and *grāmaṇī* as well as *kṣattṛ* (distributor of food) and *saṁgrahītṛ* (charioteer or superintendent of the treasury) are included in a list of jewel-holders (*ratnins*) at the ceremony of royal consecration (*rājasūya*). The male and female relations of both the *sūta* and the *grāmaṇī* are mentioned among the guardians of the sacrificial horse and the attendants of the queens, respectively, at the *aśvamedha* sacrifice, the ceremony of imperial consecration.

The most remarkable feature of the early Vedic polity consisted in the institution of popular assemblies, of which two, namely, the *sabhā* and the *samiti*, deserve special mention. Amid the obscurity of the texts and their inconclusive interpretations by different scholars, we may draw the following general conclusions about the constitution and functions of these bodies. The *samiti* was the Vedic folk assembly *par excellence*, which at least in some cases enjoyed the right of electing the king, while the *sabhā* exercised, probably from the first, some judicial functions. Both the *samiti* and the *sabhā* enjoyed the right of debate—a privilege unknown to the popular assemblies of other ancient peoples. In the late Vedic period (that of the Yajus Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas), the *samiti* disappeared as a popular assembly, while the *sabhā* sank into a narrow body corresponding to the king's privy council and court, by a process analogous to that which gave rise to the witenagemot in place of the folkmoot in the Anglo-Saxon constitution.

In forming a critical estimate of the Vedic polity, it is well to remember that the confident views of some scholars in recent times, making it out to be a constitutional monarchy or a public trust, are not authenticated by facts. We may, however, fairly conclude from the evidence of the texts that the Vedic king was subject to three kinds of limitation. In the first place, the Vedic society and State were as yet too imperfectly organized to permit concentration of authority in the king's hands. In fact, the king's office and his relations with his subjects were still in a fluid state. Secondly, the old Vedic concept of an omnipotent divine law (*vrata* or *dhāman*) and custom (*dharma* or *dharman*) must have operated as a moral, though not as a constitutional, check on the king's authority. In a famous passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[3] we have already an anticipation of the later Smṛti conception of the supremacy of *dharma* (the sacred law, or else the law of the social order) over the king. Thirdly, the order of princes and nobles as also the officials called *sūtas* and *grāmaṇīs*, who took a prominent part (as we have seen above) in the two great ceremonies of royal consecration, together with the two popular assemblies, must have collectively exercised a large, although undetermined, measure of influence over the king's administration. More indefinite appears to have been the influence of the order of the Brāhmaṇas. It is true that a fundamental principle of the Vedic polity is the separation of the ruling power (*kṣatra*) from the spiritual power (*brahma*), a principle which was pressed in some Brāhmaṇa texts to the point of essential incompatibility or even antagonism between the two powers. Again, the texts generally hold *brahma* to be dominant over *kṣatra*, although they sometimes assert their interdependence and equivalence, or even the superiority of *kṣatra* to *brahma*. On the whole, it is correct to state that while the Vedic relationship of *brahma* to *kṣatra* anticipated by many centuries the relation between the Church and the State in mediaeval Europe, the Brāhmaṇical Order, lacking the strength of organization of the Roman Catholic Church and also its will to power, failed to establish what its counterpart did at some time or other, an effective control over the temporal power. In the office of the *purohita* or the king's domestic chaplain, the Brāhmaṇas would seem to have found a pillar of their strength, for he was regarded from the first as the necessary adjunct of the king and, in fact, was characterized as 'the protector of the realm'. From some later Vedic texts, however, we learn that the *purohita* could be in danger of losing his position owing to the tyranny or caprice of his patron. We may then reasonably infer that such influence as was exercised by the Brāhmaṇas in general and the *purohita* in particular over the king, depended more upon personalities than upon the established law or usage.

[3] I. 4. 11. 14.

II. THE PRE-MAURYA AND MAURYA PERIODS (*c.* 700-184 B.C.)

In the epoch of the rise of Buddhism (fifth or sixth century before Christ) there arose, within the vast area comprising the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Malwa tableland, a chain of territorial States which are commemorated in some early Buddhist and Jaina texts in a conventional list of sixteen 'Great States' (*mahā-janapadas*). The States, which were relatively small, were of two principal types, namely, the monarchical and the republican. Leaving the consideration of the second type for the next chapter, I may here start by pointing out how the first type was standardized in the Smṛti scheme of social order with the king as one of its units, and how, in the early Artha-śāstra list of seven constituents (*prakṛtis*) of the State, the ruler was at the head of the whole group.

The position and functions of the king appear to have attained a much greater definiteness and volume during this period than in the Vedic times. The king's prerogatives, to begin with, are defined in the Dharma-Sūtras (or early Smṛtis) in terms of the rules of social precedence, of ceremonial purity, and of personal security based on social and moral sanctions, while in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (the greatest work of its class) they are interpreted in terms of the State law laying down stringent clauses for protection of the king's dignity and authority as well as his property. What is more, we can trace in some early Buddhist canonical texts a historical reference to what looks like a law of treason prevailing in the Magadha kingdom in Buddha's time. The king's functions are described in the Dharma-Sūtras as comprising the protection of the person and property of his subjects (which involves as its corollary the guardianship of the property of minors and others, the custody of lost and ownerless property, and compensation for property stolen and not recovered for its owner), the administration of justice, the guardianship of the law of the social order, the regulation of trade and commerce, and so forth. These functions are highly developed in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, a work of maturity achieved, no doubt, on the basis of its predecessors. Passing to the evidence of historical traditions and of the realistic pictures of public life in the Jātaka stories, we may conclude that the king had *inter alia* the right of appointing and dismissing his officials, of plenary jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases, and of supreme command in wars. Indeed, the Jātakas habitually describe thieves and robbers as being arrested and sent up to the king for trial, thus testifying to the undisputed prevalence of the king's peace throughout the realm.

The most important and characteristic development of political organization traceable to this period is concerned with the rise of a bureaucracy of the officials of the central government. In the works of

this period, for the first time we come across a class or order (though not a caste) of officials variously called *amātyas* (in Sanskrit) and *amacchas* or *mahāmattas* (in Pali). In the stories of the Jātakas we read how the *amacchas* (counsellors) were often asked by the king to deputize for him during his temporary absence from his duties, and how they even decided the question of royal succession in the event of incapacity or minority or default of an heir to the throne. The early Buddhist texts mention various categories of *amacchas*, such as those in charge of the army and the judicial administration and, above all, the king's guides in temporal and spiritual matters. In the objective accounts of the Pali canon and the Jātakas as well as in the systematic thought of the *Arthaśāstra*, the highest ranks in the official hierarchy were occupied by the crown prince (*yuvarāja* or *uparāja*), the king's domestic chaplain (*purohita*), the military commander (*senāpati*), and the minister (*mantrin*). In actual practice the fluidity of the administrative organization is indicated by the fact that arbitrators by choice of the parties are often mentioned in the Jātakas as deciding the cases of suitors. It remains to mention that this period witnessed the rise of the two pillars of a centralized administration, namely, a permanent revenue and a standing army. The Dharma-Sūtras contain an outline of the branches of the king's revenue, which are developed into a complete system in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. The stock list of the seven constituents of the State mentioned in the ancient Artha-śāstra tradition includes the army and the revenue along with the king and his officials in its composition.

Coming to the branch of local government, it appears to have been dominated throughout this period by the king's central administration. In the Jātakas we are told how the heads of families and even the royal officers assembled on occasion for the transaction of local business. But of a regularly constituted village council or assembly with self-governing powers, there is not the slightest trace. The Jatakas refer to village headmen (or perhaps village landowners) as well as town administrators with sufficiently wide powers, who do not appear to have been elected by the people. An old Dharma-Sūtra text[4] requires the king to appoint officials in charge of towns and villages with definite police duties within their respective jurisdictions.

The Dharma-Sūtras lay down a high standard for the king's duties. Not only is he required to provide for an extensive system of State relief to the indigent, the helpless, and the learned, but also enjoined to keep before him the objective of securing for his subjects freedom from want and fear. The early Buddhist texts likewise hold before us the examples

[4] *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 10. 26-4-9.

of good kings who observed what are called the ten royal virtues and, more specifically, the duties of the pious Buddhist layman. On the other hand, we have highly realistic pictures in the Jātakas of tyrannical kings endangering the lives and properties of their subjects.

In the period following the epoch of the small States, we come across two parallel but contradictory movements in the history of northern India. In the Gaṅgā basin, the smaller kingdoms and the republics were absorbed into large kingdoms like Kośala and Magadha, and eventually into the single empire of the Nandas. By contrast, the Indus valley, after being merged for a time in the mighty empire of the Achaemenids of Persia, broke up into a group of independent kingdoms and republics, which were afterwards overthrown by the invasion of Alexander of Macedon. Of the administration of the larger kingdoms just mentioned, we have but little information. But we may well believe, from the known facts about the enormous wealth and the huge size of the armies of the Nanda rulers, that they developed a centralized administration of a high order, doubtless on the older foundations. The Greek writers especially bear witness to the unpopularity of the Nandas, which may have been due in part to the financial burdens imposed upon the people by the necessities of their extensive civil and military administration. The same writers, however, speak highly of the good laws and the flourishing condition of some of the kingdoms of the Indus valley (those of 'Taxiles', 'Sophytes', and 'Mousikanos') at the time of Alexander's invasion in 326 B.C.

Coming to the period of the imperial Mauryas, we may mention at the outset that they built up not only the largest empire but also, as far as we can judge from the available evidence, the most highly developed administration known to our ancient times. To begin with the position of the emperor, it may safely be concluded that he retained the traditional headship of the executive, judicial, and military branches of the administration. In a famous and oft-quoted passage,[5] Kauṭilya (traditionally identified with the minister of Candragupta Maurya) places the king's judicial decree first and foremost in a list of four modes of judicial decision. In the same context, the author, repeating the factual references in the Jataka stories, credits the king with the authority of issuing executive edicts which have the force of laws. The royal edict, however, significantly enough, is not included by Kauṭilya in his accompanying formal list of the four sources of the law. Indeed, it appears from other evidence that Kauṭilya, agreeing with the Smṛti tradition on this point, held the king's executive authority to be limited not only by the supreme law of the social order, but also by specific clauses of the State law.

[5] Kauṭ., III. 1.

The bureaucratic organization of the Mauryas marked the last and the highest stage of development of a process that had begun in the preceding centuries. At the head of the Mauryan bureaucracy stood the council of ministers called *parisā* (Sanskrit *pariṣad*). There are not sufficient reasons for agreeing with the far-reaching conclusions of some Indian scholars in recent times that the ministers in Aśoka's time had the right of discussing and even rejecting the king's oral orders, or of controlling the State funds, or of depriving the ruler of his sovereignty in defence of 'the constitutional laws of the realm'. As regards the old class of officials, it is recalled in the account of Megasthenes (the well known ambassador of Seleucus Nicator at the court of Candragupta Maurya) by his reference to the Indian caste of 'councillors and assessors', and in Aśoka's inscriptions by the persons called *mahāmātras*. The old division between the civil and military branches of government as well as specialization of the town administration was maintained and developed by the Mauryas. Speaking of Candragupta Maurya's administration, Megasthenes divided the magistrates into three classes called the *agronomoi* (district officials), the *astynomoi* (town officials), and the officers in charge of the army. Kauṭilya has a parallel division consisting of officials in charge of the rural administration (the *samāhartā*, the *sannidhātā*, and their staff), the town administration (the *nāgaraka* and his assistants) and the army administration (the *senāpati* and his subordinates). From Megasthenes's further description we learn that the *agronomoi* were entrusted with superintendence of the rivers and land surveys as well as inspection of the irrigation canals; they were required also to maintain the roads with great care. The town officials were divided into six boards having charge severally of industrial arts, foreign residents, the registration of births and deaths, trade and commerce, manufactured articles, and collection of the titles to sales.. The military branch of the administration was controlled by a war office, which was divided into six boards of five members each. These boards had charge of the admiralty, the transport and commissariat, and the army units of the infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants respectively. In a fuller account Kauṭilya mentions an extensive ramification of the central administrative machinery so as to embrace within its orbit nearly thirty departments with their respective staffs and jurisdictions as well as office procedures. What care was taken by the Mauryas for the construction and maintenance of public works is proved by other facts. Megasthenes records that the roads were marked by milestones at regular intervals, and that a royal road connected Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital, with the North-West Frontier. From a famous inscription of the second century after Christ, the Girnar rock inscription of the Śaka ruler Rudradāman, we learn that a great irrigation lake was

constructed in that distant frontier of the Maurya empire by order of the local governor under Candragupta Maurya, and that it was restored after a temporary breakdown by the local authority in the reign of Aśoka.

In the time of Aśoka the outlying provinces were governed by prince-viceroys called *kumāras*, while the home provinces were directly ruled by the emperor. The provinces were divided into districts called *āhāras* or *viṣayas*.

The branch of local government under the Imperial Mauryas appears to have been centralized equally with the central administration. Kauṭilya refers to three tiers of officials (the *samāhartā* and the *nāgaraka* at the top, the *sthānikas* in the middle, and the *gopas* at the bottom) in charge of the rural and the urban areas. While the *samāhartā* was charged with direction of the State revenue and expenditure in all its branches, the *sannidhātā* controlled the receipt of the State dues at the government treasuries and storehouses. It is an index of the thoroughly bureaucratic character of the administration that the *samāhartā* and the *nāgaraka* are charged with preparation of exhaustive registers and census lists within their respective jurisdictions.

In trying to form an overall estimate of the Maurya administration, we may state to its credit that it undoubtedly ensured peace and order over a vast extent of our country so as to make it possible for the people to attain a high degree of material prosperity. It reached its height of moral grandeur under Aśoka, who employed the whole machinery of a highly organized bureaucracy and set his personal example for the moral as well as material well-being of his subjects, after being struck with passionate remorse for his one war of aggression for the conquest of Kaliṅga. On the debit side of the account we have to mention the continuance of the hateful system of espionage and strict official control bequeathed by the older rulers. To this has to be added the heavy taxation as well as the harsh penal code, which were also legacies from earlier times, and which continued even under the benign rule of Aśoka.*

* The theory of legislative authority of the Mauryas (H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, 5th Ed., p. 279 and Radha Kumud Mookerji, *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 63) and the theory of an un-Indian exaltation of the royal power in their time (K. A. N. Sastri, *Nandas and Mauryas*, pp. 174-75 and *A Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 51) are not supported by facts. (For a discussion of it *vide* my two papers in *IHQ*, December 1952, pp. 307 ff., and September 1953, pp. 286-92.) Equally unwarranted is the view (K. A. N. Sastri, *Nandas and Mauryas*, p. 178, *Comprehensive History of India*, II, pp. 57-58) that the Mauryas in organizing 'an orderly bureaucracy' departed from the usual Indian practice of limiting the State activities to the prevention of hindrances to lawful pursuits of the subjects and followed instead the model of the Achaemenids. Of 'the deep-rooted principle of local and sectional autonomy' (K. A. N. Sastri, *Comprehensive History of India*, II, p. 58), or of 'the truly democratic foundations' of Maurya rule (R. K. Mookerji, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, II, p. 62) there is hardly any trace in our sources.

III. THE PRE-GUPTA AND GUPTA PERIODS (*c.* 184 B.C. to A.D. 700)

Of the indigenous dynasties that arose on the ruins of the Maurya empire, the most important were the Śuṅgas of the Gaṅgā basin, the Sātavāhanas of western India, and the Cetas of the eastern seaboard. The administration of the Śuṅgas was on the whole a continuation of that of their immediate predecessors with a looser organization than before. The kings were content with the simple title of *rājan*, unlike the imperial titles assumed by later rulers. The provinces were governed by prince-viceroys with the significant addition of the royal title to their names, and they were assisted by the traditional council of ministers (*pariṣad*). The Śuṅga feudatories enjoyed a position little short of independence, since they could strike coins in their own name and sometimes take even the royal title. The administration of the Sātavāhanas was run on the traditional lines with some important innovations. To the old royal title of *rājan* they added the title of *svāmin* which was brought into vogue by their Śaka contemporaries and rivals. The central administration was in charge of *amātyas*, who were employed in executive and financial offices. The branch of military administration was controlled by officers like the *senāgopa* (no doubt equivalent to the old *senāpati*). A notable feature of the government of those kings was the creation of civil and military offices with a higher designation than before, such as those of the *rājāmātya* and the *mahāsenāpati*. The provinces were divided as of old into districts (*āhāras*), which were ruled by *amātyas*, and the villages constituting the district were in charge of the traditional headmen. The feudatories of the Sātavāhanas ruled as kings over large portions of their dominions, and they were known by distinctive titles, such as *mahārathis* and *mahābhojas*. Of the Ceta dynasty of Kaliṅga (southern part of Orissa and northern portion of Andhra), the most important ruler was Khāravela, who assumed the lofty titles of *ārya* and *mahārāja*, and otherwise also aspired to become a *cakravartin* (overlord) over the surrounding territory.

Coming to the foreign dynasties that came into power after the downfall of the Imperial Mauryas, we have first to mention the Indo-Greek kings of the Indus valley and the adjoining regions. In their system of administration these kings borrowed the practice of the contemporary Hellenistic monarchs, especially that of the Seleucids of western Asia. The kings usually took the Greek royal title (*basileus*), some of them calling themselves instead by the higher title of Great King (*basileus megalou*), which was assumed for the first time by the Seleucid Antiochus III. As among the Seleucids, the king sometimes appointed his heir-apparent as joint king over the whole realm. But King Futhydemos introduced the practice of appointing a younger prince as sub-king over a definite part

of the kingdom. The kings probably had a council of ministers of the traditional Hellenistic type. The Indo-Greek kings appear to have organized their Indian territories under provincial governors bearing the Greek titles of *strategus* and *meridarch*. As in other Hellenistic States, there were autonomous cities within their dominions, such cities having the device and title of some city goddess stamped on their coins. Indian or Indianized feudatories of these kings ruled in Mathurā and the Swat region.

The Indo-Greek system of administration was continued by the foreign Śaka and Parthian rulers of northern India with some features borrowed from the contemporary Sassanid kingdom of Persia. The rulers at first took the Greek royal title for king or Great King. But afterwards they adopted the Persian imperial title of Great King of kings. The Śaka kings often associated their heirs with themselves as joint kings after the example of their Greek predecessors. They likewise seem to have retained at least in Sind and Kathiawar the old Greek provincial divisions, and continued the offices of *strategus* and *meridarch* in their north-western territories. At the same time they introduced their characteristic designation of the provincial governor under the name of *kṣatrapa*, from which was coined, in imitation of the Indian official idiom, the higher title of *mahākṣatrapa*. The evidence of their coin types points to the continuance of autonomous cities under the rule of these foreign kings. The feudatories of these kings struck coins in their own names along with those of their suzerains, and they regularly transmitted their office to their descendants.

The great Kuṣāṇas, who surpassed their Greek, Śaka, and Parthian predecessors in the extent of their Indian dominion, brought with them an exalted conception of monarchy. The imperial title ('Great King of kings', 'King of kings, or Saviour') was adopted by Kadphises II in his later coin types, and that of *mahārāja-rājātirāja-devaputra* by Kaniṣka, Vāsiṣka, and Huviṣka in their coin legends. The divinity of the king is suggested by the devices on the coins of Kadphises II, Kaniṣka, and Huviṣka, which show the king's shoulder surrounded by flames, or his bust issuing from the clouds, or his head enclosed by a nimbus. The Kuṣāṇas continued the Śaka system of provincial government under *mahākṣatrapas* and *kṣatrapas*, while they introduced two new grades of military (or judicial) officers called *mahā-daṇḍanāyakas* and *daṇḍanāyakas*. From the complete absence of the city-goddess type in their series of coins, it has been inferred that the autonomous cities dating from earlier times ceased to exist under their rule.

The administration of the two Śaka ruling houses of western India (those of Bhūmaka and Caṣṭana) was based on the Indian model. The rulers adapted the title of *rājan* to their old Śaka designations of

mahākṣatrapa and *kṣatrapa*, while their ministers were called by the titles of *sacivas* and *amātyas*. It is to the credit of these kings, especially of those of the line of Caṣṭana, that they identified themselves completely with their Indian subjects. They substituted the indigenous Brāhmī script for the foreign Kharoṣṭhī in their coin legends, and a highly Sanskritized Prakrit for the old undiluted Prakrit dialect in their inscriptions. Uṣavadāta, son-in-law of Nahapāna (the greatest ruler of the first dynasty), distributed his charities impartially among the Brāhmaṇa laity and the Buddhist monks, thus assuming the rôle of the Indian princely patron of learning and piety at his best. Rudradāman, the greatest ruler of the second dynasty, chose to be remembered in his famous inscription as a model king after the Indian standards. How well the Śaka rulers looked after the interests of their subjects is proved by two facts. In the second half of the first century after Christ, the kings maintained a regular pilot service for negotiating the dangerous navigation of their great port of Broach (Barygaza). In the following century Rudradāman restored at heavy cost, out of his private funds, the historical irrigation lake at Girnar, which had been originally constructed by the provincial governor of Candragupta Maurya.

The period of the Imperial Guptas, the Golden Age of ancient Indian history, was marked by a great exaltation of monarchy. The rulers assumed the high imperial title of *mahārājādhirāja* (with variants) in their inscriptions, coin legends, and seals, while they claimed for themselves in their inscriptions superhuman qualities raising them almost to the level of the gods. In their outlying North Bengal dominion, they chose to be called by a trilogy of titles (*paramadaivata paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja*), which with a slight change became thenceforth the characteristic designation of paramount rulers. In their coin types the Guptas followed the Kuṣāṇa device of a nimbus around the king's head. The traditional machinery of bureaucratic administration was continued by these emperors with nomenclature mostly borrowed or adapted from their predecessors. But they created the new office of the *sāndhivigrahika* (minister of peace and war) and a new order of *amātyas* (*kumārāmātyas*), to which could be assigned not only high imperial officers, but also the officials on the staff of the Emperor and the Crown Prince as also those in charge of districts. The status of the Gupta feudatories varied according to their strength in comparison with the paramount power.

In so far as the provincial administration is concerned, the Guptas adopted the older models with a changed official nomenclature and some striking innovations. The provinces (*bhuktis*) were governed, as in Aśoka's times, by the princes of the blood, or as in the times of the Sātavāhanas, by the State officers (*uparikas*). The districts (*viṣayas*) were ruled by other

officers (*kumārāmātyas, āyuktakas,* or *viṣayapatis*). In North Bengal and probably also in Bihar, as we learn from the contemporary inscriptions, a Municipal Board (*adhiṣṭhānādhikaraṇa*) or a District Board (*viṣayādhikaraṇa*) helped the head of the district or the province, as the case might be, in the disposal of government lands. The Municipal Board in our fullest account consisted of four members, namely, the guild-president (*nagara-śreṣṭhin*), the chief merchant (*sārthavāha*), the chief artisan (*prathamakulika*), and the chief scribe (*prathamakāyastha*).

From the valuable contemporary testimony of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hian, we learn that the people in the Gupta dominions (the Middle Kingdom) enjoyed the blessings of peace and prosperity without the vexatious system of police control and espionage which had been the bane of the Maurya administration. According to the same observant traveller, the revenues of the Gupta empire were mainly derived from the king's share of the agricultural produce. He further noted that capital punishment was unknown, and that crimes were punished with fines. We may sum up by saying that the ancient Indian administration was at its best under the rule of the Gupta emperors. The Guptas signified their patronage of learning by the construction of successive buildings (with endowments for their maintenance) at the great Buddhist monastic university of Nālandā, while their care for public works was shown by their restoration of the famous artificial lake at Girnar during the reign of Skandagupta.

In the period immediately following the downfall of the Gupta Empire, King Harṣavardhana (*c.* A.D. 606-48) of the House of Thāneswar and Kanauj made himself the strongest power in northern India. He assumed the usual imperial titles and was assisted by the traditional council of ministers. The officers of the central government included the high minister of foreign affairs (*mahāsāndhivigrahādhikṛta*), the commander-in-chief (*mahā-balādhikṛta*), the head of the accounts department (*mahākṣapaṭālika*), besides others of lesser rank. The kingdom was divided into provinces (*bhuktis*) and districts (*viṣayas*). The village administration appears to have been highly official-ridden. The contemporary Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang gives high praise to Harṣa for his love of justice, his unremitting industry in the discharge of his duties, and his piety and popularity. The king, we are told in fuller detail, undertook incessant tours for the inspection of his dominion, he founded rest-houses for travellers and erected *stūpas* and monasteries throughout his kingdom; he used to distribute all his accumulated treasures among his subjects at the great quinquennial assemblies at Prayāga. We also owe to this most illustrious of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims a general account of the system of Indian administration at the time of his visit (A.D. 629-45). The ruling class of Kṣatriyas, we read,

was guided by the standards of benevolence and mercy, the taxation was light, forced labour was used sparingly, and families were not required to be registered. On the other hand, the penal law was marked by a certain degree of harshness which was quite unlike its exceptional mildness under the Imperial Guptas, as stated above.

In the Deccan, the administration of the Imperial Cālukyas of Vātāpi was marked by the usual characteristics. The king assumed the familiar imperial titles, the central government was in charge of officers with old or similar designations, the districts were governed by the state officers (*viṣaya-patis*), and the villages were controlled by the headmen (*grāmakūṭas*). A Cālukya inscription of A.D. 725 records the grant of a charter of liberties by the Crown prince in favour of a certain town. The record not only defines the duties of the royal officers concerned in detail, but also lays down on a graduated scale the taxes and other charges payable by the householders to the State.[7]

IV THE POST-GUPTA PERIOD (c. A.D. 700-1200)

Northern India during this period witnessed the rise of a number of Rajput ruling houses, of which the most important were the Imperial Pratihāras of Kanauj and their successor dynasties, the Gāhaḍavālas of Kanauj, the Kālacuris of Chedi, the Candellas of Jejākabhukti, the Paramāras of Malwa, the Caulukyas of Gujarāt, and the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī and Ajmir. The administration of these kings in some respects was of the conventional type. The kings assumed the customary imperial titles ; a number of high civil and military officials held charge of the central administration ; the provinces and districts, called by different names, were governed by appropriate officials ; and the traditional headman or the executive body of village elders controlled the administration of the villages. To turn to the most novel feature of the polity of these Rajput dynasties, they have been shown elsewhere to have introduced the type of 'clan monarchies' which became afterwards the hall-mark of the States of Rajasthan. This is the type of State in which the king reserves for himself the central part of the kingdom and distributes the rest among the other clan chiefs. The evidence is furnished by a number of inscriptions mentioning units of eighty-four

[7] The above account is summarized from Chapter XII (*Political Organization, post-Mauryan*) and Ch. XVI (*Political Theory and Administrative Organization*) of my *Comprehensive History of India*, II and *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, III, respectively. The view (W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 118, etc.) that the Indo-Greek kings adopted a policy of partnership between the Greek and the Indian in their Indian territories is clearly far-fetched and untenable (cf. Johnston in *JARS*, 1939, pp. 217-40, Keith in *D. R. Bhandarkar Com. Vol.*, pp. 218-30). The same objection applies to Tarn's view (*op. cit.*, p. 230 f) that the Indo-Greeks introduced into their Indian territories the Seleucid division into provinces called *eparchies* (*vide* A. K. Narayan, *The Indo-Greeks*, p. 92).

villages (the exact size of the clan chief's estate in later times) and their subdivisions. We may next mention two records of these dynasties, which throw light upon the current methods of municipal administration. In the reign of the Pratīhāra emperor Bhoja (*c.* 836-85), two guild presidents and one caravan leader (or leading merchant) held charge of the civil administration of the important city of Gwalior, which had, besides, a town council or assembly with the right of full disposal of lands in some adjoining villages. In a Cāhamāna record of A.D. 1111 we find the whole people of a town (headed by sixteen Brāhmaṇa representatives from each of its eight wards) solemnly undertaking by a signed document to trace lost and ownerless property.

In eastern India, the Pālas, who were succeeded by the Senas in the role of the leading power in that region, followed the conventional type of administration. The founder of the Pāla dynasty was chosen by the leading people for the purpose of ending a condition of anarchy. But this unique beginning was barren of constitutional results, evidently because of the absence of a regularly constituted council of ministers or similar bodies at the time. An important measure of administrative reform due to the Senas is their introduction of the method of cash assessment of land for revenue purposes at standard rates, though as yet there was no uniform standard of land measurement.

In the Deccan, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānyakheṭa and the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī, who occupied the paramount position in succession, continued the traditional type of administration under the king and various officers of the central government, who were known by old and new titles. The structure of local government under these rulers partook of the regional variety of their dominions. The villages were grouped in units corresponding to the size of the typical clan chiefs' estates above mentioned, or else according to their real (or supposed) numbers. The governors of provinces and districts were called by different titles, and they enjoyed a position of high authority and dignity. We even hear of their administration being modelled on that of the central government. The towns under Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule were in charge of prefects (*purapatis* or *nagarapatis*) or sheriffs (*ūrgavuṇḍas*), while the villages were controlled by the headmen (*grāmakūṭas*) and bodies of elders (*mahattaras*) or else village assemblies (*mahājanas*). Under the rule of the Cālukyas, the towns and villages were usually governed by assemblies of *mahājanas* with a mayor (*ūroḍeya*), sheriff (*gavuṇḍa*), or steward (*perggaḍe*) at their head. Corporate bodies exercised wide powers of self-government. They attested gifts by private individuals, received assignments of local taxes, and made grants of land for pious purposes. The great feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Cālukyas enjoyed

a position of semi-independence. They waged wars on behalf of the paramount power, assigned taxes, and alienated lands on their own authority.

In South India, the administration of the leading powers of this period, namely, the Pāṇḍyas and the Coḷas, was of the standard type with the king and a bureaucracy of high officials controlling the central government. The later Coḷa and Pāṇḍya kings assumed high imperial titles. Among the latter there was the peculiar institution of joint kings or co-regents. The office of prime minister was known to the Pāṇḍya administration, while the Coḷas had instead a body of executive officials who served as liason officers between the king and the bureaucracy. The grant of lands by the Coḷa kings for pious and charitable purposes involved a highly complex official procedure under the guidance of a chain of officials. The advanced system of Coḷa administration is illustrated by the fact that the great Coḷa emperor Rājarāja I (A.D. 985-1014) carried out a land-revenue survey of his whole kingdom, and fresh surveys were undertaken by his successors from time to time. Under the rule of the Pāṇḍyas as well as the Coḷas, there were well organized village assemblies with wide powers of self-government. The assembly (called *ūr* or *sabhā*) had an executive body (*alumgaṇam*) or various executive committees (*vāriyams*), these latter being elected by the members according to rules framed by themselves. The assemblies enjoyed such high reputation for integrity and efficiency that they received endowments in cash from kings for pious purposes, and were appointed trustees for the proper administration of temple funds. Under the Coḷa rule, the assemblies kept their own records of rights and had their own staff of officials for assisting them in their proceedings without sharing in their deliberations. They decided disputes, granted lands, founded and maintained hospitals, took charge of charitable endowments, and controlled taxes.[8]

[8] The above account is based upon Ch. X (*Political Theory, Administrative Organization, Law and Legal Institutions*) and Ch. XVII (*Political Theory and Administration*) by the present writer in the works *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vols. IV and V, respectively.

29

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: REPUBLICS AND MIXED CONSTITUTIONS

THE PRE MAURYA PERIOD

I have observed in the previous chapter that northern India in the epoch of the rise of Buddhism was the scene of a number of monarchies as well as republics. The republics were known in ancient Indian literature by the technical term *saṅgha* or *gaṇa*, used in the strictly political sense. Some recent scholars take these words to signify 'democratic forms of government', or a genus consisting of the species of 'democracies', 'aristocracies', and a mixture of both, or to signify unitary and federal 'Kṣatriya aristocracies' or 'town-wide as well as country-wide democracies'. The correct interpretation seems to be that *saṅgha* signified an aristocratic clan-republic of the Kṣatriya order and nothing more.[1]

In the pre-Maurya period the most important instance of a *saṅgha* or *gaṇa*, as explained above, is that of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī (identified with the modern village of Basarh in the Muzaffarpur District of Bihar). The Licchavis are often found to be included in a wider confederacy, that of the Vajjis (Vṛjis). Less known examples are those of the Mallas of Kuśinārā and Pāvā (in the modern Nepal Tarai region) as well as the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇis (belonging to modern Saurastra), who formed the Sātvata branch of the ancient and widely spread Yadu tribe. Different views hav been held by scholars about the constitution of the Licchavis (Vajjis), son. taking it to be a unitary republican State, others regarding it as a republic of a complex type (each member of the ruling assembly forming a State in miniature and with the assembly ruling the whole State under an elected president), and still others holding it to be a Federal State with autonomy for each constituent principality. These views are based upon different interpretations of an isolated passage in the Jātakas, but on independent grounds they appear to be improbable. Judging from a number of texts of the authentic Buddhist Canon in both the Pali and Sanskrit versions, the Licchavis' constitution appears to have been a unitary republic with an executive head (*senāpati*) and a sovereign assembly consisting of the ruling Kṣatriya clansmen. The decrees of the republic were issued jointly in the names of the *senāpati* and the *gaṇa*. The assembly, which met at

[1] For the bibliography vide f.n. 1. The significance of the terms *saṅgha* and *gaṇa* with special reference to their current interpretations is discussed in my *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, pp. 360-71.

the mote-hall (*santhāgāra*), was noted in its best days for its full and frequent sessions. It had the fullest right of electing the *senāpati* and full criminal jurisdiction over the citizens, and it exercised a severely paternal control over their private lives. It has been urged by some scholars in recent times on the authority of a single text in a late canonical commentary (the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* of Buddhaghoṣa) that the judicial procedure of the Vajjian State was such as to ensure for the citizen an unparalleled degree of personal liberty. But this view is discredited by the lateness and evidently unauthentic character of the cited passage.

As regards the constitution of the Śākyas of Kapilāvastu (identified with Tilaura Kot in the Basti District of Uttar Pradesh), there has been in recent times a sharp difference of opinion among scholars. Some take it to have been a hereditary monarchy, while others have held it to be a republic with a sovereign clan-assembly and an elected president. From a full discussion of the available evidence we are justified in concluding that the Śākyas had a hereditary monarchy as well as an assembly of the ruling Kṣatriya clan so as to combine both monarchic and aristocratic elements. The later writers apparently interpreted this unfamiliar type of a mixed constitution in such a way as to fit in with the usual type of aristocratic clan-republics.[2]

The problem of the procedure of these republican assemblies has been sought to be solved in recent times by the application of the well-known data about the methods of transacting ecclesiastical acts in the Buddhist monastic establishments. The discussion in this case has turned on the point whether the latter was only a replica of the former, or whether the two had some features (but not all) in common. Judging from the available evidence we may infer that the procedure of the republican assemblies bore a general resemblance to that of their Buddhist counterpart, subject to the inevitable difference arising from the contrast between a sovereign political assembly and an ecclesiastical gathering of monks. The application of this general principle seems to suggest (what is indeed corroborated by the scanty data directly available on the subject) a few important conclusions. Firstly, the initiative for bringing forward the proposals before the republican assemblies belonged almost certainly to the chief executive officer (or officers) holding office for a fixed term, and not to a presiding officer specially elected for the occasion. Secondly, the proposals were normally brought forward in the form of a resolution which, being put to the vote once or thrice (as the case might be), was declared carried if there was no opposition. Thirdly, in the event of an opposition the

[2] The current interpretations of the constitution of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī and of the Śākyas of Kapilāvastu are discussed in my *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, pp. 381 98.

decision was probably reached by reference to a committee of the assembly, and in the last resort by an appeal to the majority vote subject to a very substantial interference by the presiding officer. Fourthly, there were regular rules relating to the quorum, the recording of absentee votes, and so forth. Fifthly, the proposals were probably discussed by the members of the assembly before acceptance or rejection and were not taken to be approved by their mere silence. Sixthly, the decisions were certainly enforced by political sanctions, unlike the sanctions permissible to the Buddhist assemblies.[3]

From the above survey of the condition of the East Indian republics at the time of the rise of Buddhism, let us pass to a consideration of the republics of north-western India at the time of the invasion of Alexander of Macedon (326 B.C.). We may observe at the outset that the companions of Alexander, with their well-known and acute sense of discrimination between different constitutions, were able to distinguish between the two types of the republics they noticed, namely, the aristocracies and the democracies. On the authority of the scanty data furnished by them, the conclusion has recently been drawn that the constitution of the Indus Valley republics had three elements, namely, 'a Cabinet', 'a Second Chamber', and 'a Parliament', of which the first consisted of the heads of the *gaṇa*, the second was elected by the people, and the third consisted of popular representatives. Now, apart from the historical anachronism involved in the identification of the ancient Indian institutions with their supposed European analogues in modern times, it may be pointed out that the above conclusions rest on a series of guesses and nothing more. In fact, the only certain conclusion that can be drawn from the evidence of the Greek writers is that those ancient republics had, as a rule, a supreme magistrate (or board of magistrates), a council of elders, and a general assembly. The magistrates were evidently elected by the assembly, but the constitution and functions of the council of elders are not known with certainty. Of the general assembly we can only say this much with confidence that it was confined in the case of the aristocracies to the members of the ruling Kṣatriya clan, and that it was open to all freemen in the case of democracies. In the instance of one unnamed aristocracy which lay to the east of the Hyphasis (Beas) river, we are told that admission to the assembly was limited by a high (if peculiar) qualification consisting in the gift of an elephant. A peculiar constitution resembling (according to the observant Greek writers) that of ancient Sparta was that of Patalene (the

[3] The above account is summarized from pp. 371-80 in my studies already referred to in f.ns. 1 and 2. For a complete account of Buddhist ecclesiastical procedure *vide* Sukumar Dutta, *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 150-55.

Indus delta). In this State the command in war was vested in two hereditary kings of as many different houses, while the council of elders consisting probably of a class of hereditary nobles, exercised paramount authority. This, therefore, represented a mixed constitution combining monarchic and aristocratic elements.[4]

THE MAURYA AND POST-MAURYA PERIODS

Under the highly centralized administration of the Nanda and the Maurya emperors, there must have been very little room for the independent existence of the republics. We know that a number of autonomous tribes (including such ancient peoples as the Āndhras and the Bhojas) were included in Aśoka's dominions. But these are mere names. An after-growth of republican freedom took place in northern India after the decline of the Indo Greek and the Śaka powers during the first two centuries before Christ, and again after the downfall of the Kuṣāṇa power in the third and early fourth centuries of the Christian era. In the first period, there flourished in the regions of Rajasthan and the eastern Punjab a number of independent republican tribes, such as the Ārjunāyanas, the Mālavas, the Śivis, the Rājanyas, and, above all, the Yaudheyas. In the second period, the Ārjunāyanas, the Mālavas, and the Yaudheyas acquired a fresh lease of independent existence. In later times the political authority in this last-named republican State was concentrated in the hands of a chief with the exalted title of *mahārāja-mahāsenāpati* and of councillors of victory (*mantra-dharas*). Other tribes like the Kuṇindas were ruled directly by kings. With this course of development may be compared an interesting discussion in the *Mahābhārata*,[5] which pointedly advocates concentration of the vital functions of policy-making and espionage in the hands of the executive officers in the interest of security of the republics.[6]

With the rise of the Imperial Guptas in the third and following decades of the fourth century of the Christian era, the curtain is drawn on the history of the ancient Indian republics. A number of autonomous tribes including the Yaudheyas, the Mālavas, and the Ārjunāyanas of earlier times are stated to have been included in the empire of Samudragupta (*c.* A.D. 340-80). But nothing is known about their constitution. The later tribes who figure on the stage of Indian history were ruled by chiefs or kings.

[4] The above is a summary of pp. 400-05 of my studies referred to in f.ns. 1 and 2. The views criticized in this context are those of K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, pp. 64-66, 69-73.

[5] XII. 108.

[6] The above account is based upon Ch. XII, pp. 237-38 of *A Comprehensive History of India*, II and Ch. XI, pp. 162-68, of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, II, by me and Dr. D. C. Sircar respectively.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is desirable to trace here dispassionately the causes of the periodical decline and final extinction of the ancient Indian republics extending over a thousand years. There is no reason to think with a well-known historian of India that the republics were alien to the genius of the Indian people, who were always content with autocracy. On the contrary it appears, as in the parallel instance of European history between the first century B.C. and the end of the eighteenth century after Christ, that the periodical replacement of republics by monarchies was due to a train of historical circumstances and nothing more. In the pre-Maurya period, the eastern republics fell because of their own internal dissensions and the ambition of neighbouring powerful kings like those of Kośala and Magadha, while the north-western republics were swept away by the disastrous invasion of Alexander of Macedon. In the following period the republics were forced, apparently by the pressure of the foreign invaders, to vest the supreme authority in the hands of select individuals or groups so as to bring themselves into line with the normal type of monarchical states.[7]

[7] For the discussion of the problem of the fall of ancient republics, *vide* my book referred to in f.ns. 1 and 2, pp. 283-87

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THE STATE IN RELATION TO RELIGION IN ANCIENT INDIA

THE VEDIC AGE

THE Ṛg-Vedic state is best described as a tribal monarchy, and there is no evidence that in India the king performed the public sacrifice as in Homeric Greece. The Vedic sacrifice is almost always the undertaking of an individual *yajamāna*, the more complex sacrifices needing the assistance of a number of priests because of their composite ritual. The sacrifices performed by the king are no exception to this rule. The nearest approach to a public sacrifice is the *sattra* lasting for some days, months, or years, as the case may be; but there is little evidence that kings played a leading part in organizing it, and it is not known whether it was the survival of a primitive public sacrifice or a later innovation peculiar to Indo-Aryan society. On the other hand, the king had a *purohita* (lit. one placed before) from the earliest times, and Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra were among the famous *purohitas* of those far-off times. The *purohita* was then not merely the priest of the royal household, but a public functionary who shared with the king the responsibility for the safety of the State. Viśvāmitra claims to have helped King Bharata once to cross the Vipāś and the Śutudrī in high flood, evidently on the way to or from a military excursion.[1] In another hymn[2] we read: 'let us conquer in the Vidatha the Puru of hostile speech', which has been rightly held to imply that the priest prayed or sacrificed in the assembly-house for the victory of the king while he was actively engaged in war. There was, as is well-known, an element of magic in the sacrifice, and as the custodian of this magical power the *purohita* shared the responsibility with the king for the protection of the State. Its security depended on the co-operation of physical force (*kṣatra*) with spiritual power (*brahma*).[3] And the *purohita* soon came to be expressly described as *rāṣṭragopa*, protector of the realm, who alone enabled the king to make acceptable offerings to the gods.[4]

It would seem that originally the two powers were considered to be of equal importance and their relation one of balance resulting from a mutual check. Thus we read that *brahma* and *kṣatra* were created together immediately after the creation of the sacrifice.[5] Again, in the prayers at

[1] *R.V.*, III. 33. [2] *Ibid.*, VII. 18. 13. [3] *Ibid.*, IV. 50. 8.

[4] *Ait. Br.*, VIII. 24 has *na ha vā apurohitasya rājño devā annam adanti*, and VIII. 25 has *kṣatreṇa kṣatraṁ jayati balena balaṁ aśnute yasyaivaṁ vidvān brāhmaṇaḥ rāṣṭragopaḥ purohitaḥ*.

[5] *Ibid.*, VII. 19. Also VIII. 2 saying *brahmaṇi khalu vai kṣatraṁ pratiṣṭhitam*.

the beginning and end of the sacrifice at the royal consecration we read: 'May *brahma* guard me from *ksatra* May *kṣatra* guard me from *brahma*.'[6] Traces are not altogether wanting that at some stage the superiority of the *imperium* was clearly asserted, and *brahma* had definitely to accept a lower place. Soon, however, the balance is tilted in favour of spiritual power, and the change appears to be based almost on a bold trick of etymology, by which the name *purohita* (placed before) of the spiritual office is made to gain precedence for it.[7] This exaltation of the *sacerdotium* over the *imperium*, to use convenient terms borrowed from another culture, becomes a permanent feature of the ancient Indian constitution; accordingly we find that in the short section on Rājadharma in his *Dharma-Sūtra*, Baudhāyana lays down that the king should choose a person of high ability as his *purohita* and then obey his behests.[8] Even Kauṭilya, the most practical-minded of our political theorists, affirms that the Brāhmaṇa is the chief support of the throne.[9] He also compares the relation of the king to the *purohita* to that of the pupil to his teacher, the son to his father, and the servant to his master.

This evolution of the office of the *purohita* to a superior and honoured position explains the corresponding elevation of the class to which he belonged, and the emergence of a privileged position for the Brāhmaṇas as a class in the State. In a famous maxim which figures in the *rājasūya*, the Brāhmaṇa tells the assembled people: 'Here is your king, O ye people; as for us Brāhmaṇas, Soma is our king'.[10] This may appear a dangerous claim, but in practice it led only to the exemption of the Brāhmaṇa's property from taxation; and it should not be forgotten that the Brāhmaṇa was enjoined not to accumulate property, and that he commanded respect according to his learning and not his wealth. Baudhāyana reaffirms that the learned Brāhmaṇa attains great fame and is counted highborn, though he might be poor.[11] Let us note also this, that according to the same writer, not every Brāhmaṇa is entitled to the immunities of the class, and there is no violation of the laws in the case of an uneducated Brāhmaṇa.[12]

Baudhāyana includes the temple (*devagṛha*) among places which one should enter only after washing one's feet.[13] Āpastamba lays it down that a person should not stretch his legs in the direction of the temple door

[6] *Ibid.*, VII 22 *brahma mā kṣatrāt gopāyatu . . . kṣatraṁ mā brahmaṇo gopāyatu.*
[7] *Bṛ. U.*, VIII. 1. 4.
[8] *Baudh. Dh S.*, I 10 7-8: *sarvatodūraṁ purohitaṁ vṛṇuyāt, tasya śāsane varteta . . .*
[9] *Kauṭ.*, I. 9 (p. 16): *brāhmaṇenaidhitaṁ kṣatraṁ mantrimantrābhimantritaṁ; jayatyajitaṁ atyantaṁ śāstrānugama-śastritam.*
[10] *Taitt. Saṁ.*, I. 8. 10, 12 For exemption from taxes, *Śat. Br.*, V. 3. 3. 12; 4. 2. 3; IX. 4. 3. 16.
[11] *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 10. 29: *mantratastu samṛddhāni kulānyalpadhanānyapi.*
[12] *Ibid.*, 28: *brāhmaṇātikramo nāsti mūrkhe mantra-vivarjite.*
[13] *Ibid.*, II. 5. 2.

(*devatādvāram*), among other things.[14] These are among the earliest extant references to temples. We may infer from these facts that the temple as the nucleus of the religious and social life of the community had come into existence in the late Vedic Age, and that it claimed the protection and patronage of the king.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS POLICY OF AŚOKA

The reign of Aśoka forms a landmark in the history of the Indian State in its relation to religion. It has been said that during the last twenty-five years of his life Aśoka was a Buddhist monk, and as much ruler of the Church as of the State.[15] Such a view seems, however, to rest on an incorrect appreciation of the evidence. That Aśoka did enter the *saṅgha* of monks once and wore the robes of a monk is clear from his statements in the Rūpnāth, Brahmagiri, and Maski inscriptions; but it is by no means evident that he became a *bhikkhu* and actually received formal ordination, which he could not have done without abdicating his throne.[16] As for being ruler of the Church, the Buddhist Church was not organized in a regular hierarchy with a single spiritual head at the top. It was a loose confederation of independent *vihāras* (monasteries) with chapters (*saṅghas*) of their own bound only by a common allegiance to the *triratna* (Buddha, *dharma*, and *saṅgha*), and the analogy of Christendom with the Emperor and the Pope as its secular and religious heads has no application whatever in Indian conditions. According to Indian notions, the king's main duty was just to uphold the existing social order, which consisted of an infinite number of autonomous groups each with its own constitution, laws, and practices formed for various purposes like local administration, industry, trade, or religion. It is only in the rare instances of disputes arising among them proving incapable of adjustment that the king's aid was invoked; it was only then, and even then only to the extent needed to procure a just settlement of the matter in dispute, that the king did interfere in the affairs of these groups.

Three acts of Aśoka call for a brief discussion, since they may appear to lend colour to the view that regards him as the head of the Buddhist church in his day, viz. his commendation of certain scriptural passages to the special attention of the monks, his edict on *saṅghabheda*, and the summoning of the Buddhist Council. The Bhābhrū edict in which Aśoka selects some sacred texts and commends them for special study by the *saṅgha* (Order) is not an exercise of royal authority, much less of ecclesiastical

[14] *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 30. 25.
[15] Smith, *Early History of India*, 4th Ed., pp. 168-9.
[16] For rules of *upasampadā*, cf. SBE, XIII. pp. 183-238.

power, but just an expression of opinion formed by the emperor after a close study of the canon and deep reflection with the aid of the *saṅgha* itself. This opinion would obviously have been received with all the respect due to it on the merits of the subject and on account of the position of the person who addressed the *saṅgha*. The edict on *saṅghabheda* may with better justice be regarded as the exercise of royal authority, for in clear terms it orders the king's officials to see that within their respective jurisdictions all schismatic monks are unfrocked, so to say, i.e. expelled from the *saṅgha*, compelled to wear white robes, and driven to live in places not suited for the residence of monks (*āvāsa*).

To understand the need for this edict and its correct import we should look into the history of the Third Council. The *Dīpavaṁsa*[17] contains the earliest account we possess of this Council. According to it, Aśoka's patronage of Buddhism resulted in the enrichment of the *saṅgha* and the relative impoverishment of other faiths. Many adherents of the neglected creeds, 'Ājīvakas and sectarians of different descriptions' to the number of sixty thousand, began to wear the yellow robe and dwell together with the *bhikkhus* in the Aśokārāma for the sake of the revenue. They proclaimed their own heresies as the doctrines of the Buddha and caused much confusion by their unruly behaviour. This went on for a period of seven years, during which 'the *uposatha* ceremonies were performed by incomplete congregations', 'saintly, clever, and modest men' not making their appearance at them. At last, Aśoka summoned to his aid the venerable Moggaliputta Tissa, who was living at that time in solitary retreat to avoid the confusion prevailing in the Aśokārāma. Under Tissa's presidency a Council was held, at which all the adherents of false doctrines who had stealthily attached themselves to the *saṅgha* were unfrocked, compelled to put on white robes, and expelled. At the same time, the Theravāda was firmly established, and the great Tissa 'set forth the treatise, belonging to the Abhidhamma, which is called the *Kathāvatthu*'. The Council comprised one thousand of the best *arhats* (monks of the highest class), was held under the king's protection, and lasted nine months.

Now this narrative shows unmistakably that the Third Council was held to reform serious abuses that had crept into the *saṅgha* owing to a large increase in its material wealth under royal patronage. To some extent, the monarch had a duty to right the wrongs he had unwittingly generated, but even then he supplied just the regulative force necessary to enable the *saṅgha* to regain its spiritual integrity by expelling interlopers and schismatics, and the edict on *saṅghabheda* is just a continuation of

[17] VII. 34-59. cf. *Mahāvaṁsa*, V. 228-82.

the same arrangements by which the *saṅgha* was secured from disturbances due to the violence of heretics and schismatics. Let us note that the *saṅgha* even in this crisis carried on its own affairs, and depended on the secular arm of the State only for protection from evil-doers. The edict on *saṅgha-bheda* is therefore calculated only to employ the machinery of government to give effect to the ascertained wishes of the *saṅgha* by affording it the police protection necessary to function unhampered.[18]

Thus Aśoka's personal faith was Buddhism, and he lavished his patronage on the *saṅgha*; this gave rise to troubles from other sectarians, who palmed themselves off as members of the *saṅgha* for the sake of pelf, and these were dealt with by the Third Council and the edict on schismatics. That Aśoka was by no means unfriendly to other faiths is evident from his exhortations addressed to his subjects to honour the Brāhmaṇas as well as Śramaṇas (Buddhist monks), and by his presentation of three good-sized caves with polished interiors to Ājīvakas and others in the Khalatika mountain (Barabar hills). In fact, even the most powerful Asian monarchs of antiquity, as a rule, did not like to impose their personal faith on the subjects inhabiting their vast empires, and evinced no anxiety to build up States fanatically wedded to a single religious creed. In the immense Achaemenid empire of Cyrus and Darius I, 'every subject people kept its own religion. The great kings were eclectics who did not proselytize; on the contrary, we find them being initiated into the worship of foreign deities and taking them for their protectors.'[19] Aśoka's religious policy was very similar, and the good tradition of religious freedom and toleration thus established was seldom departed from till Islam burst upon the world with its pronounced antipathy to alien religious faiths. Aśoka indeed stands out unique for all time by the ringing statement of his own policy and the passionate plea for tolerance he set forth in his celebrated Twelfth Rock Edict.

But this policy of toleration did not stand in the way of Aśoka's undertaking and carrying out humanitarian reforms even where they involved interference with current practices closely bound up with religion. He preferred the method of persuasion to that of force, but did not shrink from the use of the minimum force needed to secure his ends through the elaborate machinery of administration which he controlled and directed. He deprecated the observance of many vulgar and useless (*kṣudra* and

[18] A similar instance of the state aiding in the settlement of relations among rival sects comes from Vijayanagar history. Quarrels between Jains and Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the realm were settled in 1368 by Bukka I summoning the leaders of both the sects from all important centres to a 'round table conference', which succeeded in hammering out an agreed set of regulations for the future. See T. V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar* (Madras, 1940), pp. 315-16.

[19] Huart, *Ancient Persia and Iranian Civilization*, p. 80.

nirarthaka) ceremonies, particularly by women, on sundry occasions, as during marriage, child-birth, illness, and so on. Again, he laid great stress on *ahimsā*, and devised an elaborate code for its practice and for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION AFTER ASOKA

After the active promotion of the Buddhist faith under Aśoka, there was a revival of orthodox Vedic religion under the Śuṅgas, marked by a renewed emphasis on the performance of sacrifices, particularly the *aśvamedha* as the symbol of imperial suzerainty. Buddhism continued to be a flourishing religion for several centuries; it prospered under the Sātavāhanas in the lower valley of the Kṛṣṇā river, though the Sātavāhanas themselves were mostly Hindus. It seems to have appealed strongly to the Greeks, Śakas, and Kuṣāṇas, and the north-west of India became a celebrated home of Buddhist architecture and sculpture. A General Council was held in the reign of Kaniṣka. Under the Guptas, staunch Vaiṣṇavas though they seem to have been, Fa Hien found many Buddhist *saṅghas* well looked after, and the illustrious University of Nālandā was rising into fame and beginning to attract scholars from all over Asia. The Śaiva monarch Harṣavardhana treated Buddhism and Hiuen Tsang with great consideration, and the Pālas of Bengal became distinguished patrons of that creed and supported a justly celebrated school of Buddhist art. Likewise, Jainism found its votaries and patrons in many a monarch who, with the notable exception of Khāravela of Kaliṅga, generally ruled in western India and Mysore. But when all is said, the general trend was strongly in favour of Brāhmaṇical Hinduism in its various forms, though all the creeds were more or less impartially patronized by the rulers irrespective of their own personal faith.

We must note, however, that the State in the person of the ruler was by no means the sole patron of religion. The official nobility, rich merchants acting individually or grouped in more or less powerful guilds, sometimes even regiments of soldiers, besides craft guilds of artisans, competed and co-operated with one another in religious undertakings. These usually took the form of excavating caves as *vihāras* and *caityas* (Buddhist temples), construction of *stūpas*, endowing the maintenance of monks by the supply of food, clothing, and medicine, and providing for the performance of worship at different shrines. The structural temple is a more common feature of Hinduism and Jainism, and the temple came in course of time to develop a strong social side to its organization, attracting numberless endowments, which accumulated in its hands through several generations. It became the bank, the landlord, the school, and the hospital of

the village or town where it was located, and offered scope for the display of the piety and liberality of all types of persons and groups. The inscriptions on the walls of the famous temples, especially in South India, like Tānjore and Drākṣārāma or Śrīraṅgam, are seen to form a veritable cyclopaedia of the history and culture of the surrounding area. But generally the major works were carried out by the ruling monarchs, like the excavation of the Kailāsa temple at Ellorā by Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa I, the erection of the magnificent temples at Tānjore and Gaṅgaikoṇḍacolapuram by the Coḷa monarchs Rājarāja I and his son Rājendra I, and those at Puri and Konārak by the Gaṅga kings of Orissa, not to speak of the grandeur that was Vijayanagar, which impresses so much even in its present ruined condition. In almost every instance private charity supplemented the effort of the State in a striking and useful measure.

Toleration or encouragement of faiths other than the monarch's own was the normal rule of the Hindu State. The Arabs testify to the freedom of worship they enjoyed on the west coast of India, which they frequented for trade; and perhaps earlier still a number of Christian communities had sprung up there and in Ceylon, as Cosmas Indikopleustes noted, and somewhat later the Parsis found a safe asylum in the Bombay coast when they were driven out of their native land by Muslim intolerance. The rulers of Vijayanagar, when they began to employ Muslims in their service, caused a copy of the Koran to be placed in front of the throne, so that the followers of the Prophet might take part in the court ceremonies without violating the tenets of their faith. It cannot be said, however, that this enlightened and liberal rule of conduct was never broken by Hindu monarchs. Buddhist tradition is strong that Puṣyamitra, the founder of the Śuṅga line, persecuted that faith relentlessly. Towards the close of the sixth century, a Śaiva ruler, Śaśāṅka of central Bengal, is said to have 'dug up and burnt the holy Bodhi tree at Buddha Gayā, broke the stone marked with the footprints of the Buddha at Pāṭaliputra, destroyed the convents, and scattered the monks, carrying his persecutions to the foot of the Nepalese hills'. In the South we have many stories, often much exaggerated and boastful, of public disputations in which the Jains and Buddhists were worsted by the Śaiva saints who flourished in the Tamil country from the seventh to the ninth century, and of the hardships to which the defeated sects were subjected by the contemporary Pallava and Pāṇḍya rulers. A Śaiva monarch of Gujarat, Ajayadeva, is stated to have begun his reign towards the close of the twelfth century, 'by a merciless persecution of the Jains, torturing their leader to death'. Sectarian animosities then were not altogether unknown, and some rulers here and there did earn notoriety by departing from the noble example of Aśoka and the established law of

the land. But considering the extent of the country and the duration of time involved, we must hold that the rule of the freedom of religious worship was remarkably well observed in the Hindu State. Places like Ellorā and Kāñcīpuram attest at once to the liberal and impartial patronage of all sects on the part of kings, merchants, and others, and the prevalence of a general atmosphere of harmony among the votaries of the different sects. Ellorā exhibits rows of Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist, and Jain caves and temples in one and the same neighbourhood, and Kāñcīpuram was divided for long into four quarters known respectively as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Jina, and Buddha Kāñcī; the last has disappeared altogether in relatively modern times, while traces of the Jina section survive. Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism are still the flourishing faiths of the city.

31

SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN INDIA

INTRODUCTORY

THE aim of this chapter is to show how the genius of Indian society has expressed its philosophy of life in legal and social forms, because the evolution of legal doctrines is one of the best tests and examples of such philosophy. Professor Filmer S. C. Northrop of the Yale University stresses the unity and the aesthetic and intuitive nature of Oriental culture, as contrasted with the theoretic component in knowledge characteristic of Greek, Anglo-American, and even Marxian ideologies. A study of the sources of the Indian philosophical theories as applied to politics and law would be of assistance not only to the student and philosopher, but also to the man of affairs who is grappling with the crucial problems of the present-day world. I shall present here an *aperçu* of the Indian doctrines relating to social and political evolution, referring to the important original texts as well. It will have a vital bearing on the practical day-to-day life also, because the ideas and ideals of each country as they progress from age to age have, and indeed ought to have, something racially characteristic in them. In politics and philosophy as well as in literature and the arts, nothing that is not evolved from within and is not in harmony with inherited as well as individual traditions will be characteristic or essentially fit to live. While we shall do well, as throughout our history, ever to be tolerant and hospitable to fresh views, we must also be alive to the need for assimilating them with our own culture, and we must imitate the wise gardener when, for improving the yield, he skilfully inserts a graft. A nation's philosophy and politics are the outward expressions of its culture and sentiment, and they use the symbols best understood in the country of their origin. They bespeak an acquaintance with national life and thought. Our political ideas are a function of our intellectual and civic life.

We have had in India a succession of thinkers who, like the mediaeval Churchmen in Europe, were the founders and partakers of what may accurately be called a university tradition and an educational system which was based on, and culminated in, religious training, but included also in its scope an attempt at universal research born of catholic sympathies and curiosities. The term *upaniṣad* meant, etymologically, sitting near a person, and is the exact synonym of the French *séance* or session. The

Upaniṣads represent the outcome of sittings or gatherings which took place in the hermitages and forests. They not only profoundly influenced Indian thought, and, through China and Persia, Asian thought, but also filtered to Europe through Persia, Arabia, and Asia Minor, and left their impress on Thales and Pythagoras as also on the Gnostics and Neo-Platonists, and through the universities of the Middle Ages and ultimately through Machiavelli, Descartes, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer have become part of most European cultures. The comprehensiveness of the studies at Nālandā and Vikramaśilā as well as the Kāñcīpuram was not surpassed in the early universities of the West—Paris, Bologna, and Salerno.

The lineage of ideas is indeed a marvellous thing. In the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa there occurs a passage relating to a royal visit paid in the seventh century A.D. to a forest university. The passage says that the king saw 'Buddhists from various provinces, Jains in white robes, mendicants, ascetics, followers of Kapila, Lokāyatikas (materialists), followers of Kaṇāda (of the atomic schools), followers of the Upaniṣads, students of legal institutions, students of the Purāṇas, adepts in sacrifices, adepts in grammar, followers of Pañcarātra and others besides, all diligently following their own tenets, pondering, urging objections, raising doubts, resolving them, expounding etymologies and disputing, discussing, and explaining moot points.'[1] Can there be a more thought-provoking and suggestive description of a true university with no exclusions and many preferences?

We have been in touch with the current Western thought and speculation and under their influence for nearly a century in our universities. We have overlooked, if we have not disdained, our past traditions and history. There is a great danger of our not securing the full benefit of the newer culture for lack of proper assimilation. Should it not be our aim to build, on the foundations of our own accumulated lore and inherited stock of capacities and temperament, a stately and enduring structure with the full aid of Western learning and science and thus to develop our own soul? Especially is this process called for in the study and practice of politics, an art and a science more intimately connected with national aptitudes and national outlook than almost any other. What is in the bone cannot be eliminated, and, as pointed out by the author of the *Dangerous Sea*, one realizes with a shock the cyclical character of life and ideas. He shows how the whole history of the French Revolution and the dictatorship which followed it constitutes really a transplanted chapter of Roman history. The Fascists, the Spartacists, and the Nazi revolution of our own times have also had their prototypes in the past. The curious student may also discover analogies between certain developments of

[1] *Harṣacarita* (Führer's Ed.), p. 316.

communism at the present moment and similar phenomena which are described by the compilers of the Purāṇas, not to mention incidents in the history of the later Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. It was in these so-called Dark Ages that there arose the idea of a League of Nations fulfilling the functions which were part of the programme of the Holy Roman Empire, and which were elaborated by the mediaeval theorists, both regal and private, who strove to bring about an effective policing of the nations. No nation building its future political or social habitation can afford to ignore its past racial culture or the lessons of its history. Our endeavour should therefore be to find out how far in the various departments of political and socio-economic theory we can get guidance from our own heritage of speculation and action.

THE IDEAS OF LAW

Manu[2] describes the monarch as embodying in himself the four ages, and Śukra describes him as the maker of the age.[3] Bhīṣma also says in the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* that 'the king makes the age.'[4] The great rulers of whom we have authentic records adopted the same view. Beginning with the times prior to recorded history, we find that the evolution of what are termed Keraḷa *ācāras* is a conclusive proof of the flexibility of ancient lawgivers and pristine laws. The fact that the Nambūdiris observe customs different from those followed by the Brāhmaṇas of other parts shows that Hindu *ācāras* or laws have been modified to suit special or local conditions. The *sarvasva-dāna* (gift of everything) form of marriages, the *dvyāmuṣyāyana* (filial relation to two families) form of adoption, the absence of any rigid insistence on the early marriage of women (the last mentioned obviously a later innovation in Hindu law forced on the people on account of the foreign invasions and the insecurity of the times), the possibility of a woman remaining unmarried to the end of her days, the modification of the rule that a man should marry within his own caste, the importance given in worship and ritual to the *tantras* as distinguished from the *mantras*—all these and many other differences in social usage indicate that there was no crystallization of social or even religious law and practice in ancient India, and that there was an abundant scope for changes to meet altered situations and conditions. This policy was not confined to the early times, but was followed even later, as was triumphantly demonstrated by what is historically known regarding Rāmānuja's gospel and that of the Tengalai saints who brought about the adoption of Tamil as a concurrent language with Sanskrit. We notice attempts actively supported and fostered by the sacerdotal castes

[2] IX. 301. [3] *Śukra*, IV. 1. 60. [4] *Mbh.*, XII. 69. 79.

during the reign of the Vijayanagar kings, seeking the active assistance of the State for implementing an agreement to put down the pernicious dowry system and punishing the breakers of such agreement. This document bears the signature of the exponents of all branches of sacred studies in the kingdom.[5]

The basic idea of *dharma* underlies alike the ethical, social, and political ideas of the Indian lawgivers. Wherever there was doubt or controversy, the practice of right-minded Aryans was the touchstone and determining factor. In the Śikṣāvallī of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*[6] occurs the well-known passage: 'Those Brāhmaṇas in thy neighbourhood who are of sober judgement, who are meek and intent upon the performance of their duties, as they would act in any matter so also shalt thou act therein.' As a logical result, it was ordained that the higher the station or caste, the more serious was the offence when a moral law was broken. Manu[7] says that a king should be fined a thousand times as much as a common man for the same offence. The *Mahābhārata*[8] lays down that the greater the position of the men, the weightier should be their punishment. It must, however, be admitted that the later developments and the hardening of the caste system led to conditions and regulations analogous to those present in other countries where a small racial or religious aristocracy is surrounded by a large number of so-called inferior races.

The source of political authority was the king. The law and order to be maintained by him was the *dharma*, or right order of the world, which was generally equated with ancient divine rules and age-long usage. Such usage was held to stand next to the revealed scripture in authority.[9] The real lawgiver was thus not the king, but the right usage, the enforcement of which was vested in the king.

The elimination of conflict and strife and the avoidance of interference with another man's right to happiness and peace, undisturbed by a neighbour's violence, were the objectives of this polity. It is noticeable that there has always existed in India, side by side with the elaboration of ritual and propitiatory ceremonies, the realization that *dharma* transcends sacred or ritual observances. 'He that has performed all the sacred observances and has not the following qualities', we are told in the *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra*, 'comes not to a union with Brahman'. These qualities are compassion, patience, purity, active endeavour and thought (*anāyāsa*) as well as freedom from turmoil, avarice, and envy.[10] Righteousness or *dharma*, which has to be promulgated and enforced by the king, implies

[5] Cf. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire*, II. p. 189.
[6] I. 11.
[7] VIII. 336.
[8] XII. 267 16.
[9] *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 1. 2. 1
[10] *Baudh Dh. S.*

and connotes a comprehensive code of behaviour and attitude necessary to maintain peace and order. A noteworthy canon of conduct is laid down for the king that as he owes a deep debt of obligation to his soldiers and people who help him in his campaigns and the defence of his kingdom, he should redeem that debt by embarking on public works such as rest-houses, places of assemblage, tanks, and irrigation works.[11] The importance of 'natural law' and of conscience is recognized by way of guidance in matters of doubt where the Vedas, usage and custom, and divine commands do not furnish any help.[12]

In Europe, law has been regarded sometimes as the embodiment of eternal justice, as a part of the natural heritage of man, and as embodying natural reason. Another school of thought holds that law is that which is brought into existence by the fiat of a lawmaker; in other words, that law is obeyed not merely because it is just or good, but because it has been laid down by the State. In this way arises the distinction between positive law and ethics. The ethical conception of law was the first to be expounded by Indian lawgivers and philosophers in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra, Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra, Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra, Manu Smṛti,* and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, as shown elsewhere. Kauṭilya lays down that the royal edict (*rājaśāsana*), which he explains as the command of the kings (*rājñām ājñā*), is one of the four legs of law.[13] Corroborating this, Śukra insists that the greatest amount of publicity should be given to the laws by the king, who should have them inscribed in all public places with his signature and date.[14] This interpretation gives rise to the theory adumbrated in the *Śukra-Nītisāra*[15] that the king is the maker of the age and the promulgator of the principles of virtue and vice. The philosophical basis of this concept of law is also illustrated by Jaimini in his definition of *dharma*, which lays down that '*dharma* brings about its object as the result of command (*codanā-lakṣaṇo'rtho dharmaḥ*)'.

IDEAS OF ORIGIN OF SOCIETY AND THE STATE

There are certain passages in ancient Hindu literature pointing to a condition of society without a king. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[16] it is stated: 'The *devas* and the *asuras* were fighting ... The *asuras* defeated the *devas* ... The *devas* said: "It is on account of our having no chief that the *asuras* defeat us. Let us create a king." All agreed.' A family was composed of several members living under a common head. An aggregate of several families made up a village. *Viś* was a larger formation implying settlement, while *gana* was an even more comprehensive term,

[11] *Mbh.*, XII. 42. 7.
[12] Cf. *Manu*, II. 1
[13] *Kauṭ.*, III. 1.
[14] II. 606-8.
[15] IV. 1. 60.
[16] I. 3.

embracing as it did the entire population occupying a particular area, which subsequently converted it into a *rāṣṭra* or State. Society in those days had to keep itself in constant readiness for combat not only to quell external aggression but also internal dissension, and the origin of the Rājanya (Kṣatriya) class has to be traced to this circumstance. The invocation of the blessings of unseen powers through an adept agency became a necessary incident of that arrangement, and this gave rise to the Brāhmaṇas as a distinct class. The bulk of the Aryan community not included in either of these categories was known as the *viś* or Vaiśyas, while the exigencies of conquest led to the absorption of numerous non-Aryans into the Aryan fold, who eventually became Śūdras.

The *Mahābhārata*[17] narrates the following story on the origin of kingship. In ancient days men were ruined in consequence of the prevalence of anarchy. They devoured one another just as the stronger fish devour the weaker ones in water. A few men then assembled together and agreed among themselves that the babbler, the cruel, the voluptuous, and the greedy among them should be disowned. That arrangement worked for some time. On seeing that it was also not satisfactory, they approached Brahmā with a prayer to grant them a king. Brahmā thereupon induced Manu to take up the kingship. The people agreed to pay certain taxes and prayed that in return the king should destroy their enemies to enable them to lead peaceful lives. Bhīṣma, who relates this incident to Yudhiṣṭhira, gives a slightly different version of it in a previous chapter. There he says that in the *kṛtayuga* there were no sovereignty, no king, no punishment, and no punisher, and that all men used to protect one another actuated by a sense of righteousness. They, however, soon found that this work was too much for them and became gradually a prey to error (*moha*), greed (*lobha*), desire (*rāga*), and lust (*kāma*). When such confusion set in and righteousness perished, men sought the help of Brahmā, who thereupon composed a stupendous treatise on the *puruṣārthas* (the ends of human life), of which the works of Bṛhaspati, Śukra, and others were but abridgements. The *devas* then prayed for a king to rule over men, and Visnu created Virajas. Virajas, however, did not relish the kingship conferred on him, and Anaṅga, his great-grandson, became the first king of Bhāratavarsa.[18] Both these stories as well as the passage referred to from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* show that the Aryans had no ruler in the olden days, and that kingship with them was regarded as a comparatively late institution. There are certain passages in the Vedas pointing to the king's divine origin, and this has

[17] XII. 67. 17-26.   [18] XII. 59. 14, 15, 87, 91.

become an accepted belief by the time Manu's *Dharma-śāstra* was composed. Manu[19] states that when men were without a king and dispersed through fear in all directions, the Lord created a king for the protection of all of them, and that the essence of the Dikpālas (lords of the quarters) was used for his creation. There is, however, no doubt that this was merely a metaphorical description of the paramountcy of the monarch, designed to enforce obedience from the subject. In a striking passage Kauṭilya says that the vulgar opponents of a king may be silenced by the argument that the duties of Indra (the rewarder) and Yama (the punisher) are blended in him, and that whoever disregards him will be visited with divine punishment.[20] The Buddhistic *Dīgha Nikāya*[21] also says that mankind was righteous at the beginning, and that when sinfulness gradually crept into human society, men selected one who was the most handsome, gracious, and powerful among them and made him king. He was called *mahāsammata*, because he was selected by the great.

IDEAS OF POPULAR CONTROL OVER KINGSHIP

From a passage in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[22] it is seen that the *purohita* (priest) took a promise from the king to the following effect at the time of the *mahābhiṣeka*, the great coronation ceremony: 'Between the night I am born and the night I die, whatever good I may have done, my heaven, my life, and my progeny, may I be deprived of, if I oppress you'. The ritual of the *rājasūya* sacrifice described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[23] requires that the king should take the consent of the earth in the following words: 'Mother Pṛthvī, injure met not, nor I thee.' The commentator thus interprets this passage: the king and the country should enter into friendly relations with each other like son and mother. Somadeva in his *Nītivākyāmṛta*[24] states that the king should recite a hymn every day to the following effect: 'I am protecting this cow (earth) which bears the milk of the four oceans, whose calf is righteousness, whose tail is enterprise, whose hoofs are castes and the stages of life, whose ears are enjoyment and wealth, whose horns are diplomacy and valour, whose eyes are truth and purity, and whose face is the law. I shall not be patient with any one who injures her.' Śukra, who also propounds the theory of the divine origin of kings, is careful to explain at the same time that they resemble only Indra and other Dikpālas in the performance of certain functions.[25]

Although the early rulers were elected, kingship in the course of time

[19] VII. 3-4.
[20] *Kauṭ.*, Trivandrum Ed., Vol. I, pp. 63-64.
[21] *D. R. Bhandarkar's Carmichael Lecture* (1918), p. 121.
[22] VIII. 4.
[23] V. 4. 11. 11.
[24] Jaina-granthamālā Ed., p. 256.
[25] *Śukra*, I 73-7

became hereditary. But some vestiges of popular control are still visible in epic and Purāṇic literature. The story of Pṛthu, one of the greatest of the early kings of India, is worthy of note in this connection. Vena, a descendant of Anaṅga, referred to already, was invested with regal power by Bhṛgu and other sages, according to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,[26] when there was no king to govern men, although their choice was contrary to the will of the people. Vena, who like Charles I of England was a firm believer in the divine right of kings, and an atheist to boot, began to oppress his subjects. The sages thought that Vena was preying on his people as a serpent fed with milk bites the very person who nourishes it. They told him: 'Righteousness is of supreme worth and compasses the welfare of the subjects. Do not suffer it to run to waste. If righteousness is lost, the kingdom and wealth of a king come to nought. The king who protects his people from thieves etc. and gathers due tribute attains good fortune both in this world and the next.' Vena turned a deaf ear to their entreaties, whereupon he was slain by them, and Pṛthu was created out of his arms. Pṛthu, according to the *Mahābhārata*,[27] asked the sages what he was expected to do, and being advised by those assembled that he should fearlessly perform all righteous acts, promised to do so and became king. Other instances of the election of kings are also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. Thus Kuru was elected on account of his virtue.[28] Again, Janamejaya, although he was only a child, was installed in the position of the king by the people on the death of Parīkṣit.[29] Ordinarily, the crown descended from the father to the eldest son; but if that son was a minor, if a younger son had to be preferred to an elder, if an heir apparent had to be ordained, or if an interregnum had to be avoided by the appointment of a temporary ruler, the express consent of the people was imperative. The same was the case in the event of a king's desire to abdicate. Thus Devāpi, although he was the eldest son of Pratīpa, was prevented by the people from succeeding him, since he was a victim of leprosy, and Śantanu had to be preferred by the father, much against his natural inclinations.[30] Daśaratha proposed the anointment of Śrī Rāma as *yuvarāja* (Crown Prince) after taking the representatives of the people into his confidence and discussing the question with them in all its bearings.[31]

Apart from these rights, which include the tacit assent of the people even in cases of regular succession, there were several other ways in which the king's possible leaning towards the exercise of unbridled authority was kept in check. In the first place, the right to oust an unrighteous king

[26] IV. 14. 2, 9, 17, 32-4. [27] XII. 59. 102-4. [28] *Mbh.*, I. 94. 49.
[29] *Mbh.*, I. 44. 6. [30] *Mbh.*, V. 149. 22-3. [31] *Rām.*, II. 1. 45; 2. 15-16, 21; 4. 16.

was emphasized, although seldom exercised in practice in India. In the *Anuśāsanaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, it is stated that a king who tells his people that he is their protector, but who does not or is unable to protect them, should be killed by his subjects in a body like a rabid dog.[32] In the *Śāntiparvan* we come across a passage to the effect that a king who follows the advice of bad ministers and becomes a destroyer of righteousness deserves to be killed by his subjects and becomes ruined with all his family.[33] The appellation *naradeva*, a god among men, is applied only to virtuous kings. Sukra, in his *Nītisāra*, has stated that, while a virtuous king is a part of the gods, a vicious king is a part of the devils.[34] Manu says that a king who does not afford protection but receives his tax will soon sink into hell, and that he takes upon himself all the foulness of all his people.[35]

THE KING'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The most common name used for a king in Sanskrit is *rājan*. The *Mahābhārata* says that seeing Pṛthu, his subjects exclaimed, 'We love him', and that on account of their loving attachment he was called *rājan*.[36] Kālidāsa expresses the same idea in the *Raghuvaṁśa* when he states that Raghu's appellation of *rājan* became possessed of meaning when he made himself lovable to his subjects.[37] If a king without doing violence to the dictates of righteousness does what is good to all his subjects, he stands as firm as a rock,[38] and everyone thinks of him: 'He is mine'. Manu says that he should behave towards his subjects as a father to his children.[39] Kālidāsa expands this idea in the *Raghuvaṁśa* when he says that Dilīpa was the real father of his people, because he led them along the path of righteousness, protecting and feeding them.[40] It is also stated in the *Mahābhārata* that he is the best of kings in whose realm every subject moves fearlessly as a son in the house of his father.[41] From the constant comparison instituted between the king and a father in ancient works, some scholars have come to the hasty and unwarranted conclusion that his position was that of a benevolent despot. This is by no means correct. The actual conception was that the king should live for his subjects and not for himself. It is stated in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[42] that the prince is entitled to enjoy himself only up to the moment when the sacred *abhiṣeka* (consecration) water falls on his head. How the king should

[32] *Mbh.*, XIII. 61. 33.
[33] *Ibid.*, I. 70 ; Cf. *Mbh.*, V. 131. 13.
[34] *Mbh.*, XII. 29. 139 ; also XII. 59. 125
[35] *Mbh.*, XII. 120. 25.
[36] I. 24.
[37] 130. 27.
[38] *Ibid.*, 92. 9 ; Cf. also 96. 9-10.
[39] VIII. 307-8.
[40] IV. 12.
[41] VII. 80.
[42] *Mbh.*, XII. 57. 33.

conduct himself thereafter is well explained in the *Mahābhārata*[43] by the observation that just as an expectant mother without caring even for the objects which she likes best seeks only the well-being of her forthcoming child, so also should the king sacrifice what he loves best for securing the well-being of his subjects. The same idea is repeated in the *Agni Purāṇa*.[44] In the *Mahābhārata*[45] it is stated that everywhere all the people from Brāhmaṇas to cowherds were more attached to Yudhiṣṭhira than to their own parents. Kauṭilya[46] says: 'In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness, in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good.' In a touching scene in the *Āśramavasaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*,[47] Dhṛtarāṣṭra on the eve of his departure for the forest informs the people assembled as follows: 'I make over to you this Yudhiṣṭhira as a pledge; I entrust you also as a pledge to Yudhiṣṭhira.' Elsewhere in the same work it is stated that the king is the best body of his subjects and the subjects the best body of their king, the eternal duty of the king is to make his subjects happy.[48] If he performs the duty of protecting his subjects well, no other penance or sacrifice is needed for him.[49] Manu says that a king who protects his subjects righteously and punishes the wicked duly offers sacrifices in which lakhs are given as fees.[50] Kauṭilya expresses the same idea when he says: 'The religious vow of a king is his readiness for action; the discharge of duties is the performance of his sacrifice; and equal treatment of all is his offer of fee and ablution at consecration.'[51] Somadeva also points out that the sacrifice to be performed by a king is the protection of his subjects and not the killing of animals (which is incidental to ordinary sacrifices).[52]

Paripālanam or all-round protection is an expression embracing a very wide meaning. It is not merely the preservation of law and order. It is the administration of the State to such a degree of perfection as to enable the king and every one of his subjects to pursue undisturbed the paths of *dharma, artha,* and *kāma*. The king himself is to be an exemplar to his subjects, since whatever *dharma* is respected by him will be respected everywhere, and since the subjects will generally like to move only along the path trodden by him.[53] Righteousness should therefore be first practised by him before he enforces it on his subjects. The king, according to the *Mahābhārata*, was created in order that righteousness might emanate

[43] XII. 56. 45-6.
[44] 222. 8.
[45] *Mbh*, II. 13. 18.
[46] I. 19.
[47] 9. 14 15.
[48] *Mbh.*, XII. 68. 58.
[49] *Ibid*, XII. 69. 73.
[50] VIII. 306.
[51] *Kauṭ*, I. 17.
[52] *Nītiv.*, p. 273.
[53] *Mbh.*, XII. 75. 4; Cf. *Rām.*, II. 109. 9; *Kām.*, I. 15.

from him, and if he was devoid of it, he should be called a *vṛṣala*.[54] One becomes a king for advancing the cause of *dharma* and not for acting capriciously. All creatures depend on *dharma*, and *dharma* depends on the king. He, therefore, is the true king who maintains *dharma*.[55] The question, what is *dharma*, has been clearly answered in Chapter 109 of the *Śāntiparvan*. *Dharma* is that which is conducive to the advancement of everybody, which prevents injury to everybody, and which is capable of upholding everybody. It need not be precisely what is stated in the Vedas, because everything has not been ordained in them.[56]

Śukra says that tax is the price for protection paid by the subjects to the king, who is only their servant, though he appears to be their lord.[57] According to Manu, the king derives not only one-sixth of the tax in grain, but also of the righteousness and unrighteousness of his subjects.[58] In the *Mahābhārata* it is observed: 'A king should milk his kingdom like a bee collecting honey from trees. He should act like the cowherd who takes milk from a cow without injuring her udder and without starving the calf. He should, like the leech, take in the blood mildly. He should treat his subjects like a tigress carrying her cubs, touching them with her teeth, but never biting them. He should behave like a mouse, which, although it has sharp and pointed teeth, nibbles at the feet of sleeping animals in such a manner as to keep them unaware of it.'[59] Again it is laid down that the tax should vary according to the capacity of the taxpayer. No tax should be levied without determining the outturn and the amount of labour needed for production, because no one can be expected to work without incentive.

The *Kaccit adhyāyas* of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*[60] contain numerous suggestive allusions to the duties of kings. Thus in the *Mahābhārata*, Nārada asks Yudhiṣṭhira whether agriculturists were being kept away, whether all men were not being allowed to approach the king without fear as if he were their father and mother, whether the cultivators were not contented, whether for purposes of irrigation large tanks filled with water were not being maintained at convenient distances, whether loans of seed grain were not being advanced to agriculturists, whether officers in charge of the municipal and military departments, as also those in charge of trade, agriculture, and justice, were not working in unison, and whether villages were not being converted into towns and hamlets

[54] *Ibid.*, XII. 90. 13-5.
[55] *Ibid.*, 3-5.
[56] *Ibid.*, XII. 109. 10-3.
[57] I. 188.
[58] VIII. 304. Kālidāsa refers to a sixth share of the *tapas* of ascetics in the forest as tax belonging to the king (*Śākuntala*, II. 13).
[59] XII. 88. 4-6.
[60] *Mbh.*, II. 5 ; *Rām.*, II. 100.

into villages.[61] Kauṭilya mentions *utsavas* (festivals) and *samājas* (gatherings) as popular institutions to be encouraged by the king.[62]

The protection of subjects necessarily involves, as a correlative, the punishment of the wicked. There were very few cases of theft in ancient India. That is due to the fact that thieves were brought to book and the stolen property recovered promptly. Otherwise the king had to make good the value of that property from the State coffers. Even so late a writer as Vijñāneśvara emphasized this duty.[63] A king should neither be too lenient nor too severe, but administer such punishment as may be deemed fit and proper. Kauṭilya says: 'Whosoever imposes severe punishment becomes repulsive to the people, while he who imposes mild punishment becomes contemptible. But whoever imposes punishment as deserved will be respected.'[64] In the *Mahābhārata* it is stated: 'Although the most impregnable fortress of a king is the love of his subjects, and it is therefore essential that he should be merciful, if he is always forgiving, the lowest of men may guide him as a *mahout* (driver) an elephant. Nor should he be ferocious. He should be like the vernal sun, neither too hot nor too cold.'[65] This aphorism is very like what a mediaeval monk demanded of a king, namely, that he should not be too salty, lest he be spat out ; nor too sweet, lest he be swallowed. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[66] says that the Kṣatriyas take up arms in order that the oppressed may not weep or wail. This part of the subject may well be concluded with the following amusing observation made in the *Mahābhārata*.[67] 'These six persons should be abandoned like a leaky boat on the sea, viz. a teacher who does not teach, a priest who does not study the scriptures, a king who does not afford protection, a wife who utters disagreeable words, a cowherd who wishes to live in a village, and a barber who desires to live in a forest.'

MINISTERS

The ministers form an important and indispensable part of the State constitution. The *Mahābhārata* says that it is impossible for a king to look after all his duties, and hence he should devolve his duties on his ministers.[68] Kauṭilya also points out: 'Sovereignty is possible only with assistance. A single wheel can never move. Hence a king should employ ministers and hear their opinion.'[69] Kauṭilya draws a distinction between *amātyas* (officers) and *mantrins* (councillors). Manu says that the king may appoint seven or eight ministers who are learned in the sciences, heroes

[61] *Mbh.*, II. 5. 19, 56, 76-81.
[62] Comm. on *Yāj.*, II. 36.
[63] XII. 56. 39-40.
[64] XII. 57. 44-5.
[65] I. 7.
[66] I. 21.
[67] I. 4.
[68] 114. 36. ; Cf. Kālidāsa, *Śākuntala*, I. 10.
[69] XII. 93. 76.

skilled in the use of arms, descended from noble families, and well tried. It is impossible for a man to discharge even an easy duty singly, much less the duties relating to kingship. The king should therefore hold deliberations with his ministers, ascertain each minister's opinion separately as also their conjoint opinion, and then decide upon the course that may be the best. He should also appoint as many other officers as may be needed for the due transaction of business and see that they are honest, wise, firm, etc.[70] Numerous other qualifications for ministers are enumerated in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Agni Purāṇa*.[71] The *Mahābhārata* says that a king who is angry at the advice tendered by a well-wisher, merely because it is not to his taste, and who does not follow the conduct of the wise, deviates from the duty of a Kṣatriya.[72] Kauṭilya states that a cabinet of ministers may consist of as many members as the needs of a kingdom call for, that they should start what is not begun, complete what is commenced, improve upon what has been accomplished, and enforce strict obedience to orders. He further observes that one thousand sages form Indra's cabinet of ministers, and hence he is called Sahasrākṣa, although he has only two eyes.[73] Somadeva insists on ministers giving the correct advice to kings, although for the time being such advice may be distasteful to them. His commentator quotes the author of a Smṛti Bhāguri, who is of opinion that the minister who represents what ought to be done as untruth, and what ought not to be done as truth, is the king's enemy, though he puts on a minister's appearance. He asks: 'When a child refuses to drink milk, is it not slapped on its cheek?'[74] The king should not have one or even two ministers; three should be the lowest number of members of his cabinet.[75] At the same time, he should himself look into matters affecting his subjects.[76] Somadeva advises the king not to act against the advice of his ministers.[77] He should not create a situation in which the country would rise against him, because, of all the dangers to which he is liable, the anger of the people and their representatives is the most formidable.[78] He should, says the *Mahābhārata*, employ each of his officers in such work as he is fit to perform, and act in unison with them, as the strings of a musical instrument do with its respective notes.[79]

SOCIAL SYSTEM

The Indian social structure, like the Indian political as well as municipal structure, was based on the same principles of *salus populi*

[70] *Manu*, VIII. 54-7, 60.
[71] *Kauṭ*., I. 15.
[72] *Ibid*., p. 18?.
[73] XII. 120. 24.
[74] 238.
[75] *Nītiv*., p. 123.
[76] *Ibid*., p. 124.
[77] XII 93. 29-30.
[78] *Ibid*., p 127.
[79] *Ibid*., p 157.

suprema lex esto (Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law)—of the supremacy of the ethical and spiritual life over the mere life of the senses and of harmonizing progress with order. *Dharma* includes not only the rights and duties of States and the inter-relations of States and subjects, but also the rights and duties of individuals *per se* and *inter se.* The social life also, like the political life or the municipal life, is not the supreme end or aim of life. Its essential basis is *svadharma* (one's own duty) and it is founded on duties rather than upon rights. The performance of individual and social duties by the subjects in a spirit of *niṣkāma-karma* (work not motivated by the desire of personal gain) is as vital as political or civic administration, and are complementary to each other. Nay, it is itself an act of worship of God and is a means of self-realization. Such a society, properly inter-related and organized, would result in the attainment of *abhyudaya* (worldly progress and prosperity) and *niḥśreyasa* (spiritual beatitude). The sphere of individual, domestic, and social duties includes not only diverse ceremonial observances (*saṁskāras*) but also diverse observances of individual, domestic, and social ethics. As in the sphere of political and municipal administration, so in the spheres of the performing individual, domestic, and social duty also, the vigilant supervision of the king was required by precept, by example, by warning, and by punishment. This is made clear by Kalidāsa in his *Raghuvaṁśa*, where he says about King Dilīpa:[80] 'His subjects, like chariot-wheels, which go along the track determined by the charioteer, did not swerve by even a line from the broad oft-trodden path laid by Manu.' Thus statecraft and society-craft were dependent on each other and intensified each other.

SUMMARY

The above paragraphs give a rapid and necessarily imperfect survey of some of the political and social ideas and theories that were evolved and obtained currency at various periods of Indian history. They point to a continued tradition of a strong central government where the king was a real factor to be reckoned with, and not a *roi fainéant* (a do-nothing king). His authority and powers were, however, exercised after constant consultation with a ministry and through heads of departments, whose jurisdiction was extensive, and who, under wise kings, were always encouraged to speak their minds. Kingship was mainly hereditary, but sometimes elective. Political speculation was active, and there was the theory of a compact with the king, as also the idea that taxation was the return for good administration and protection. These were some of the conspicuous features

[80] I. 17.

of ancient Indian polity. The old dispensation was outwardly, and in later theory and practice actually, unfettered and autocratic. Nevertheless, by reason of the grant of complete local freedom and the practice of what, in effect, was a form of State socialism, the king acted as being ever in the Great Task-Master's eye—the task-master being what was indifferently called *dharma* or the voice of the people, which latter, when it expressed itself, was clear and unequivocal. Popular gatherings, if the *Artharva-Veda* furnishes an accurate picture, were full of life, but at the same time animated by a lively desire to achieve concord.[81] The greatest contribution to posterity made by the Hindu tradition was the broad-mindedness, sympathy, and the toleration of different view-points exhibited almost alone in India amongst the civilized communities of the earlier days. When Egypt persecuted and hounded out the Jews, when racial and communal conflicts disfigured the history of Babylon and Nineveh, when later on we see that in the States of Greece and Rome slaves formed the basis of those marvellous cultures, and when in the mediaeval ages the baiting of Jews alternated with the baiting of Roman Catholics by Protestants and *vice versa*, we had the spectacle in India of unfailing hospitality to foreign religions and foreign cultures. It would be unfair and inaccurate not to mention that the Buddhists and Jains suffered some pains and penalties, especially in the South of India. But which country can show anything like the treatment of the Parsees, who, flying from oppression in their own country of Persia, asked for and obtained succour of the wise west-coast king, to whose protection and active encouragement of their faith and tradition they ultimately owe their dominant position in the India of today? Which country can furnish a parallel to what happened in Travancore under the rule of extremely conservative and religious-minded monarchs? From the days when Christian congregations were split into innumerable and warring factions owing to the Arian controversy at the Council of Nicaea and the question of images, the Chera kings of Travancore gave a whole-hearted welcome to the followers of the Eastern Church, whose Patriarch of Antioch even now boasts of a larger following in Malabar than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Which king outside India has surpassed the monarchs of Travancore and Malabar, who conferred sacerdotal honours, presents, lands, and dignities on the ministers, bishops, and archbishops of the Christian Church, with the result that today the largest Christian population in India is found in the State of Travancore? Which ruler in the world's chequered history has enunciated in more moving and powerful language than is found in the Edicts of

[81] *A.V.*, III. 30. 5-6.

Aśoka the Great, the principles of tolerance and comprehension of differing creeds and ideals co-existing with a spiritual urge towards the consolidation and regeneration of the Ruler's own faith?

Such have been the marks and the characteristics of Indian civilization not only at its peak points but also through the centuries. Can this instinct of universality, this understanding of all points of view, and the feeling that the realization of the Supreme must connote a sympathy with, and a reconciliation of, many forms of thought and belief, be better expressed than in the words of Tāyumānavar in his *Hymn to Pārvatī*: 'The light and bliss of supreme knowledge that envelops and absorbs all forms of belief as the ocean absorbs all rivers'?[12] In his Rock Edict Twelve, the Emperor Aśoka declares that he does reverence to men of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, and he adds that he who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect ; and he ends the Edict with these ever memorable words: 'Concord is the supreme good (*samavāya eva sādhuḥ*)'.

This is the idea that underlies the United Nations Organization. It has uniformly characterized the philosophies that have been evolved in India ; these have always been based on *ahiṁsā* and *abhaya* and on the recognition of the conformity and unity of all existence.

[12] Cf *Raghuvaṁśa*, X. 26

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SOME BASIC IDEAS OF POLITICAL THINKING IN ANCIENT INDIA

THE DOCTRINE OF MĀTSYA-NYĀYA

AT the back of political thinking in India there was the process of dichotomy at work. Hindu thinkers tried to understand the State by differentiating it from the non-State. Their method was logical as well as historical. That is, in the first place, they tried to investigate in what particulars the State analytically differed from the non-State; and in the second place, they tried to picture to themselves how the pre-State condition developed into that of the State, i.e. how the State grew out of the non-State. The chief solution of both these problems they found in the doctrine of *mātsya-nyāya*—the maxim that the larger fish devour the smaller.

Now, what is the non-State according to the Hindus? The same question was asked by the philosophers of Europe thus: 'What is the state of nature?' And the answer of the Hindu is identical with that of the European.

According to Hooker (1554-1600) in the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, the state of nature is a state of strife. The *Leviathan* of Hobbes (1588-1670) declares similarly that the state of nature is a state of war and of no rights. In Spinoza's (1632-77) opinion also, in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the state of nature is a state of war and a state of the right of might. The non-State is thus conceived to be a war of 'all against all', an 'anarchy of birds and beasts', or 'a regime of vultures and harpies', as John Stuart Mill would have remarked. This Hobbesian 'law of beasts and birds' or the *Naturprozess* of Gumplowicz is the Indian maxim of the larger fishes devouring the smaller. Should there be no ruler to wield punishment on earth, says the *Mahābhārata*,[1] 'The strong would devour the weak like fishes in water. It is related that in the days of yore people were ruined through anarchy, devouring one another like the stronger fishes preying upon the feebler.' In the *Manu Saṁhitā*,[2] likewise, we are told that 'the strong would devour the weak like fishes', if there be a virtual reversion to the non-State (if, for example, the king is not vigilant enough in meting out punishments to those that should be punished). The *Rāmāyaṇa*[3] also describes the non-State regime as one in which 'people ever devour one another like fishes'. And a few details about the non-State condition are furnished in the *Matsya Purāṇa*: 'The child, the old, the sick, the ascetic,

[1] XII. 67. 16-17; 68. 11-13. [2] VII. 20. [3] II. 67. 31.

the priest, the woman, and the widow would be preyed upon according to *mātsya-nyāya*'[4] (should *daṇḍa* or punishment fail to be operative at the proper time).

The idea of the fish-like struggle for existence was thus a generally accepted notion in the 'floating literature' of ancient India. It found an important place in the exclusively political treatises also. Kauṭilya (*c.* fourth century B.C.) observes in his *Arthaśāstra*[5] that *mātsya-nyāya* prevails while the State is unformed. 'In the absence of the wielder of punishment, the powerful swallows the powerless.' And Kāmandaka (*c.* A.D. 500), who generally follows Kauṭilya, writes in his *Nītisāra*[6] that in the absence of punishment (*daṇḍa*), the destructive or ruinous *mātsya-nyāya* operates because of mutual animosities of people, and leads to the disruption of the world. Nor was the doctrine confined within the circle of academicians and theorizers. We find it prevalent even among diplomatists and practical statesmen, e.g. of the ninth century. In the declarations of Dharmapāla of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, we are told that it was 'in order to escape from *mātsya-nyāya*,' i.e. from being absorbed into a larger kingdom that the people 'made his father Gopāla accept the sovereignty'.

This theory of the non-State or the state of nature has had important bearings on other doctrines of Hindu political philosophy. *Mātsya-nyāya*, for instance, is an expressive technical term in India's legal phraseology. In Raghunātha's (fifteenth century) *Laukika-Nyāya-Saṁgraha* we find *mātsya-nyāya* coupled with *sundopasunda-nyāya*.[7] *Mātsya-nyāya* arises, as Raghunātha explains it, under a double set of conditions. First, there must be a conflict between a powerful and a comparatively powerless unit. And secondly, the latter must have been crushed and obliterated by the former. It is frequently referred to, says he, in the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas, and he quotes the following passage from Vasiṣṭha: 'By this time that *rasātala* region had become extremely sovereignless i.e. an anarchic non-State, characterized by the ignoble *mātsya-nyāya*'. Vasiṣṭha's verse is elucidated by Raghunātha with the gloss that 'strong fishes began to make an end of the weaker ones'.

The non-State is, then, a state of anarchy, one in which the 'tyranny of robbers' has full play, 'justice is non-existent', and the 'people prey upon one another'. It is 'the greatest evil'.[8] 'Enjoyment of wealth and wives is impossible' under it. Only the robber is then happy. Even his happiness is precarious, because 'a single man is deprived of his loot by two, and the

[4] CCXXV. 9. [5] I. 4. [6] II. 40.

[7] This analogy is based on this Purāṇic allusion: The demons Sunda and Upasunda were brothers, like Pyrochles and Cymochles in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. They quarrelled over the nymph Tilottamā and destroyed each other in the contest.

[8] *Mbh.*, XII. 67. 1-3, 12-15.

two are robbed of theirs by several combined'. 'A free man is made a slave' and 'women are assaulted'. The psychology of men in the state of nature is brought out in the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*[9] establishing the following causal nexus: 'Then foolishness or stupidity (*moha*) seized their minds. Their intelligence being thus eclipsed, the sense of justice (*dharma*) was lost. Cupidity or temptation (*lobha*) overpowered them next. Thus arose the desire (*kāma*) for possessing things not yet possessed. And this led to their being subjugated by attachment (*rāga*), under which they began to ignore the distinction between what should and what should not be done. Consequently, there appeared sexual licence, libertinism in speech and diet, and indifference to morals. When such a revolution set in among men, Brahman (the idea of Godhead) disappeared, and with it, law (*dharma*).'

THE DOCTRINE OF DAṆḌA (PUNISHMENT, COERCION, SANCTION)

The phenomena of government are founded on the data of human psychology, and the general trend of thought in regard to them seems to have been the same all the world over. In ancient China, Hsun Tze (305-235 B.C.) strongly condemned the doctrine of Mencius (373-289 B.C.), who had postulated the 'original goodness' of human nature. For, according to his counter-theory, 'man is by nature wicked, his goodness is the result of nurture'. Su Hw states, 'The ancient rulers understood the native viciousness of man, . . . and therefore created morals, laws, and institutions in order that human instincts and impulses might be disciplined and transformed'.

Let us now turn to the western world. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher of the first century A.D., 'looked upon the institutions of society as being the results of vice, of the corruption of human nature. They are conventional institutions made necessary by the actual defects of human nature.' This doctrine of human depravity and the natural wickedness of man was entertained by the Church Fathers also. The idea that 'the institution of government was made necessary by sin and is a divinely appointed remedy for sin' was continued and developed by St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great. It was 'emphatically restated by the ecclesiastical and political writers' of the period from the ninth to the thirteenth century, and found a champion in Pope Hildebrand, Gregory VII (1073-1085).[10]

The verdict of Hindu political thinkers on the nature of man is identical. According to Kāmandaka,[11] men are by nature subject to

[9] 59. 15-21.
[10] Cf. A. J. and R. W. Carlyle, *Mediaeval Political Theory in the West*, II pp 143-6. III. pp. 97, 105, 187.
[11] *Kām*, II 42.

passions and are covetous of one another's wealth and wife. 'Rare', says Manu,[12] 'is man pure or sinless' (by nature). The lower ones tend to usurp the places of the higher. People are prone to interfere with the rights of others and violate morals and manners. Not that there was no Saturnian golden age of pristine purity and bliss. For, anticipating by over a millennium the dogmas of Father Lactantius and others, the *Mahābhārata* says: 'At first there was neither State nor ruler, neither punishment nor anybody to exercise it. The people used to protect one another through innate righteousness (*dharma*) and sense of justice.'[13] But, as among the Stoics and Canonists, the 'fall' of mankind is accounted for by the Hindus also on the basis of a postulate of sins, the loss of true religion, *moha*, stupidity, and the like.

On the whole, therefore, it is not a roseate romantic conception of human tendencies and instincts that the *Mahābhārata* offers. We read in the *Śāntiparvan*: 'By nature men tend to overthrow one another. Left to itself, the whole world would be in a mess' like a devil's workshop. As a rule, men are used to behaving like the 'creatures that cannot see one another when the sun and the moon do not shine', or like 'fishes in the shallow waters', or like 'birds in places safe from molestation where they can fly at one another's throats in a suicidal strife'. Men, we are told, normally acknowledge only one right, and that is the right of might. Those who do not part with their property for the asking run the risk of being killed. The wives, children, and food of the weak are liable to be seized perforce by the strong. 'Murder, confinement, and persecution constitute the eternal lot of the propertied classes.' 'The very phrase, "This is mine" (*mamedam*), may be lost from the vocabulary, and *mamatva* or ownership become extinct.' The natural tendency of human relations, again, is toward sexual promiscuity. The formation of marriage alliances or of stable societies is not instinctively prompted in man as he is. And if possible, he would shirk even agriculture, commerce, and other means of livelihood, preferring a state of slothful ease and the 'primrose path of dalliance'.[14]

Such is the natural man, or man as Nature made him, in the political anthropology of the *Mahābhārata*. Instead, therefore, of postulating with the writer of *Emile* that 'all things are good as their Author made them, but everything degenerates in the hands of man', or finding reason to complain of 'what man has made of man', the Hindu students of political theory set a high premium on the institutions and conventions that make up the artificial thing called civilization. In fact, it is to 'educate' man

[12] *Manu*, VII. 21-4. [13] XII. 59. 14.
[14] *Mbh.*, XII. 68. 10-11, 14-15, 18-21.

out of the deplorable mire of primitive licence and beastly freedom that government has been instituted, they say. The State is designed to correct human vices or restrain them and open out the avenues to a fuller and higher life. And all this is possible only because of *daṇḍa*.

In all discussions of political theory, therefore, the doctrine of *daṇḍa* occupies the foremost place. Some writers have even called their treatises on politics and statecraft *daṇḍa-nīti* or the science of *daṇḍa*. In the *Manu Saṁhitā*,[15] at any rate, no other category is calculated to command greater attention. For, is not *daṇḍa* 'divine, God's own son, the protector of all beings, and as powerful as law itself'? Indeed, it makes all created beings keep to their respective duties (*svadharma*)—the 'virtue' of Plato or the 'functions' of Bradley and other neo-Hegelians like Bosanquet and the Italian philosopher Croce, and makes them co-operate with one another in procuring the enjoyment (*bhoga*) or happiness of all. The *division du travail* (of work) of which Durkheim speaks is brought about by *daṇḍa*, according to Manu. Nay, it is in reality the king, the male (all other being female), the manager of affairs, the ruler, the surety for the four orders pursuing their own duties in life. Further, it governs, protects, and watches; and last but not least, it is identical with law. To crown all, the whole world is rectified by *daṇḍa*, and even the gods and demi-gods are subject to its authority.

Daṇḍa, as interpreted by Manu, is obviously the very principle of omnipotence, comparable to the *majestas* of Bodin or the *summa potestas* (highest power) of Grotius. It is the abstraction of that power whose concrete embodiment is *aiśvarya* (lordship), *svāmitva* (ownership) or sovereignty in a State, which is explained by Figgis as the real 'divine right' of kings. It is absolute, with jurisdiction over all, uncontrolled by any entity. To use a very recent category, *daṇḍa* is the most signal feature of *Staatsräson* (reasons of State), an expression of *Machtpolitik* (power politics) and marked by *autolimitazione* (self-limitation) in the sense of Jellinek, and Redano.

In Hindu political thought *daṇḍa* is a two-edged sword and cuts both ways. On the one hand, it is a terror to the people and is corrective of social abuses. It is a moralizer, purifier, and civilizing agent. As the *Nītisāra*[16] observes, it is by the administration of *daṇḍa* that the State can be saved from a reversion to *mātsya-nyāya* and utter annihilation, and it is by *daṇḍa* the people are set right. It is through the fear of punishment, according to the *Śukra-Nītisāra*,[17] that people become 'virtuous' and refrain from committing aggression or indulging in untruths. *Daṇḍa* is efficacious, moreover, in causing the cruel to become mild and the wicked

[15] VII. 14, 23. [16] *Kām.*, II. 40. 2. [17] IV. 1.

to give up wickedness. It can subdue even beasts, and of course it frightens the thieves and terrifies the enemies into submission as tributaries, demoralizing all those who are wayward. Nay, it is good also for preceptors and can bring them to their senses, should they happen to be addicted to an extra dose of vanity or unmindful of their own vocations. Finally, it is the foundation of civic life, being the 'great stay of all virtues'; and all the 'methods and means of statecraft' would be fruitless without a judicious exercise of *daṇḍa*. Its use as a beneficent agency in social life is therefore unequivocally recommended by Śukra.

But, on the other hand, *daṇḍa* is also a most potent instrument of danger to the ruler himself, to the powers that be. The maladministration of *daṇḍa*, says Kāmandaka, leads to the fall of the ruler. Manu[18] does not hesitate to declare that *daṇḍa* would smite the king who deviates from his duty, from his 'station in life'. It would smite his relatives too together with his castles, territories, and possessions. The common weal depends, therefore, on the proper exercise of the *summa potestas*, the *aiśvarya*, the *Staatsräson*. Manu would not allow any ill-disciplined man to be the administrator of *daṇḍa*. The greatest amount of wisdom accruing from the 'help of councillors and others', is held to be the essential pre-condition for the handling of this instrument. And here is available the logical check on the eventual absolutism of the *daṇḍa-dhara* (punisher) in the Hindu theory of sovereignty.

In the two-edged sword of the *daṇḍa*, then, we encounter, on the one side, *Staatsräson* (interests of the State), and on the other, *Sittlichkeit* (i.e. morality, virtue, *dharma*, etc.). The conception of this eternal polarity in societal existence is one of the profoundest contributions of the political philosophy of the Hindus to human thought.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAMATVA (PROPERTY)

According to the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*,[19] property (ownership) does not exist in the non-State (*mātsya-nyāya*), i.e. in the condition of men left to the pursuit of their 'own sweet will'. In the non-State, of course, men can possess or enjoy, but they do not 'own'. Property, however, is not mere *bhoga*, i.e. enjoying or possessing; its essence consists in *mamatva* or *svatva*, i.e. ownership. It is one's own-ness that underlies the 'magic of property'. To be able to say *mamedam* (this is mine) about something constitutes the very soul of owning or appropriation. This proprietary consciousness is created in men for the first time by the state through its sanction, *daṇḍa*. For it enjoins that vehicles, apparel, ornament, and jewels must be enjoyed by those to whom they belong, and that

[18] VII. 28-30.

[19] XII. 68. 13-29.

one's wife, children, and food must not be encroached upon by others. And it is only through *bhaya* or fear of the State that the people observe these injunctions, and the sanctity of property is kept entire. A distinction is here brought out between mere *bhoga* and *mamatva* as the basis of the difference between the non-State and the State. In Europe the identical discrimination has been made by Rousseau in his *Social Contract*. 'In the state of nature', says he, 'there is but possession, which is only the effect of the force or right of the first occupant'; whereas ownership, which is founded only upon a positive title, is an incident of 'civil society'.

Two miraculous changes are effected in social life, once private property is thus ushered into existence. First, people may sleep at night without anxiety 'with doors open'. And secondly, women decked with ornaments may walk without fear though 'unattended by men'.[20] Property is in Hindu philosophy thus considered to be not the cause, but the effect of the State. The position is entirely opposite to that of the Marxian 'economic interpretation of history'.

This sense of security as regards property is therefore the first great achievement in the humanization of Caliban. This is the first item in the civilizing of man by *daṇḍa* out of the *mātsya-nyāya* or 'law of beasts or birds'. One may, therefore, discover in *daṇḍa* the very foundation of human liberty and progress. And this is the standpoint of Hindu political philosophy as well as of modern 'idealism' in European philosophy.[21]

THE DOCTRINE OF DHARMA (LAW, JUSTICE, AND DUTY)

Property is the first acquisition of man through the State. His second acquisition is *dharma*. The doctrine of *dharma* is, like the doctrine of *mamatva*, an essential factor in the theory of the State, and both have their foundations in the doctrine of *daṇḍa*.

Dharma is a very elastic term. Like *jus*, *Recht*, *droit*, *diritto*, it has more than one meaning. It really admits of almost all the ambiguities associated with the term 'law' as analysed by Holland in his *Jurisprudence*. For purposes of political theory we may confine ourselves to the import of *dharma* as law, justice, and duty, as somewhat new values of life. The doctrine of *dharma*, then, enunciates three propositions: first, that the State differs from the non-State as a law-giving institution; secondly, that the State differs from the non-State as a justice-dispensing institution; and thirdly, that the State differs from the non-State as a duty-enforcing institution.

In *mātsya-nyāya* there is no law, no justice, no duty. The State is the originator of law, justice, and duty.

[20] *Mbh.*, XII. 68. 30-32. [21] U. Redano, *Lo Stato Etico* (Florence, 1927), pp. 278-82.

A. DHARMA AS LAW

Dharma (law) is the creation of the State, and the State as such has the sanction of *daṇḍa*. Theoretically, therefore, every *dharma*, if it is nothing but *dharma*, is *ipso facto* what should be called 'positive' in the Austinian sense. *Dharma* is obeyed as *dharma*, only because of the coercive might of the State.

In ancient European theory, law is the embodiment of eternal justice. Thus, according to Demosthenes (fourth century B.C.), laws are the gifts of the gods and the discovery of the sages. In Aristotle's conception, law is the rule of God and reason. Stoics like Cicero and Seneca believed that law lay in the hearts of all men. The doctrine of 'natural law', of law as the 'king of all things', was maintained by the jurists, such as Gaius and others, whose views are codified in the *Digest* of Justinian. It was the theory also of Celsus and other Church Fathers. In mediaeval European (Teutonic) theory,[22] so far as there was any theory independent of the tradition of Roman jurisprudence, law was not something 'made' or created at all, but something which existed as a part of the national, or local, or tribal life. The modern theory of law in Europe may be said to have originated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with Bodin and Hobbes in their analysis of sovereignty. It has since become classical, however, as the handiwork of Austin, the father of analytical jurisprudence. According to this view, law is the command of the sovereign enforced by a sanction. Thus there are two theories of law—first, law as uncreated or original, existing either as a part of the universal human conscience, taught by 'natural reason', or as a custom among the people ; and secondly, law as created by the fiat of a law-maker, as something which is to be obeyed, not because it is just, good, or eternal, but because it has been enacted by the State. Both these conceptions are to be found among the speculations of Hindu political philosophers.

The ethical conception of law as the dictate of conscience, i.e. as *jus naturale*, has a long tradition in Hindu thought. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[23] law is identical with truth and as powerful as the king. It is of course the creation of God. Brahman (God), we are told, 'was not strong enough ; so he created still further the most excellent *dharma* . . . There is nothing higher than the law. Thenceforth even a weak man rules a stronger with the help of the law, as with the help of a king. Thus the law is what is called the truth. And if a man declares what is truth, they say he declares the law ; and if he declares the law, they say he declares

[22] Carlyle, *op. cit.*, I. p. 235 ; G. L. Comme, *Folklore as an Historical Science* (London, 1908), pp. 84-100.
[23] I. 4. 14.

what is true. Thus both are the same.' According to Āpastamba,[24] law is what is 'unanimously approved in all countries by men of Aryan society who have been properly obedient to their teachers, and who are aged, of subdued senses, and neither given to avarice nor hypocrites'. In the *Manu Saṁhitā*,[25] again, law is whatever is practised and cherished at heart by the virtuous and the learned who are devoid of prejudices and passions. Vasiṣṭha,[26] and Baudhāyana[27] also hold the view that law is the practice of the *śiṣṭas*, i.e. those 'whose hearts are free from desire'. The *śiṣṭas*, or *ṛṣis*, i.e. passionless and unavaricious persons of India, are obviously analogous to the 'sages' of Demosthenes. In the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*,[28] law is defined as *sadācāra*, i.e. the practice or conduct of good men, what seems pleasant or good to one's self, and the desire that springs from mature consideration. In the *Vyavahāra Darpaṇa*, law is described as something eternal and self-existent, the king of kings, far more powerful and right than they. In these two definitions we have once more the Oriental counterpart of Greek, Stoic, Roman, and Patristic conceptions of law as morality.

In Hindu analysis, *dharma* came to be defined as positive law also. The conception of law as *rājñām ājñā*, in Kauṭilya's language, i.e. as command enforced by sanction, finds clear expression in the writings of Nārada, Śukra, and Jaimini. In the *Nārada Smṛti*,[29] we are informed that the performance of duty having fallen into disuse, positive law (*vyavahāra*) has been introduced, and that the king as superintending the law is known as *daṇḍa-dhara* or wielder of *daṇḍa*, the power to punish. The sanction is definitely mentioned in the *Śukra-Nītisāra*,[30] according to which the sovereign should categorically state in his command that he would 'surely destroy by severe punishment those offenders who after having heard his decrees would act contrary to them'. In order that the law may be seriously recognized as command, Śukra stipulates that the greatest amount of publicity should be given to it. For instance, it is the duty of the sovereign to have the laws publicly announced by sounding the State drum[31] or have them inscribed in esplanades as written notices. The documents embodying these commands (*śāsana-patra*) are to bear the king's signature, date, etc.[32] Laws thus being promulgations of the State, we read further in the *Śukra-Nītisāra*[33] that the king is the 'maker of the age', the 'cause of time', and of good and evil practices, and that since the ruler is the dictator of virtues and vices, people make it a point to practise that by which he is satisfied. Besides, as the law is upheld by sanction, we can easily understand why Śukra advises the sovereign to make use of his terrible weapon[34]

[24] *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 7. 20. 8.
[25] II. 1.
[26] *Vas. Dh. S.*, I. 5. 6.
[27] *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 1. 1. 4-6.
[28] I. 7.
[29] Introd. i. 2.
[30] I.
[31] *Śukra*, I
[32] II.
[33] IV.
[34] I.

in order to maintain the people each in his proper sphere. The same idea of positive law is expressed by Jaimini in the very definition of *dharma.* The *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* declares *codanālakṣaṇo'rtho dharmaḥ* (*Dharma* is that desired object, *artha* which is characterized by command, *codanā*). Jaimini has also examined the reason why that which is determined by a command should be obligatory. He analyses the reason as lying in the fact that 'the relation between the word of command and the purpose to which it is directed is eternally efficacious'.

B. DHARMA AS JUSTICE

We have now to understand the doctrine of *dharma* as justice in its bearing on the theory of the State. The dignity of justice has been declared by Manu[35] in the following terms: 'If justice is violated, it destroys the State ; if preserved, it maintains the State. Therefore justice should not be destroyed.' Such sentiments in the *Manu Saṁhitā* could be bodily incorporated in the writings of a Jonas or an Alcuin of the ninth century and other mediaeval European theorists,[36] with whom the maintenance of justice is the *sine qua non* of the State and kingship.

But what is justice? It is a very practical or pragmatic definition that the Hindu theorists offer. According to Manu,[37] justice consists in the application of law to the cases arising between the members of the State. And that law is to be known from the customs and from the Smṛtis (*Institutes*), e.g. those of Gautama, Yājñavalkya, and others. Justice as interpreted by Śukra[38] consists of two elements: First, it consists in a discrimination of the good from the bad (of course, according to the laws). Secondly, it has a utilitarian basis, inasmuch as it is calculated to minister to the virtues of the rulers and the ruled, and promote common weal. The doctrine of *dharma* as justice is thus organically connected with the theory of the State as contrasted with the non-State.

C. DHARMA AS DUTY

Mātsya-nyāya is a condition in which duties are nil. According to the *Śāntiparvan*, men left to themselves tend even to persecute their mothers, fathers, the aged, the teachers, the guests, and the preceptors.[39] It is the fear of *daṇḍa* that brings about an order among men, each man minding his own duty (*svadharma*).[40] This theory of *svadharma* (one's own duty) or 'My station and its duties', as Bradley would put it, has a political significance as well. It has the sanction of the State behind it ; for, says

[35] VIII. 15.
[36] Carlyle, *op. cit.*, III. p. 109.
[37] VIII. 3.
[38] IV.
[39] 68. 18.
[40] *Mbh.*, XII. 68. 8 ; *Manu*, VII. 21, 22, 24 ; *Śukra*, I.

Manu,[41] 'neither a father, nor a teacher, nor a friend, nor a mother, nor a wife, nor a son, nor a domestic priest should be left unpunished, if they do not keep within their duties'. According to Śukra[42] also, the people should be kept, each in his proper sphere, by a 'terrible use' of the weapon of sovereignty.

Altogether, then, the doctrine of *dharma* in its entirety imparts to the State the character of an institution for the advancement of *la civilite*, *Kultur*, or 'culture'. The State elevates man out of the law of beasts by instituting legislation, adjudication, and the enforcement of duties. The functions of the State are thus in keeping with the ideas involved in the doctrine of *daṇḍa*. The State as a pedagogic or purgatorial or moral-training institution is not merely a *mamatva*-insuring instrument, i.e. an ownership-securing agency, but a *dharma*-promoting *samūha* (public association), i.e. *lo stato etico* of Redano, the *Rechtsstaat* of Jellinck, i.e. the *Kulturstaat* of Fichte or Hegel or the 'virtue-State' of Plato. And herein the Hindu theory meets Aristotle's conception of the State as the means to the furtherance of the 'highest good' of man.

THE DOCTRINE OF VARṆAŚRAMA (CLASSES AND STAGES)

In the *mātsya-nyāya* condition there is the *prajā* or the people, but no State, because there is no *daṇḍa* to enforce *dharma*. If the *prajā* is not to remain *ad infinitum* an amorphous mass of *selbst-ständig* atoms, it must follow *svadharma*, i.e. the members of the society must perform their respective 'duties', which, as we have seen, are really 'laws' turned inside out. The observance of these duties would necessarily imply the organization of the people into a unified State, a *samūha* or a *polis*.

Now, organizationally speaking, *prakṛti* or the members of a society naturally fall into economic and professional groups or classes, the *groupements professionnels*, the so-called castes of India. These groups of the people or classes of members of the State are known as *varṇas*, classes, lit. colours, probably designated after some typical (or hypothetical?) ethnic complexion. Further, from the standpoint of the individual, we have to notice that people pass through well-marked metabolistic or rather physiological stages, e.g. infancy, adolescence, etc. Similarly, the stages of life in every person are called the *āśramas*. The total population with all the interests and problems of all its different groups and periods of life is then comprehended by the two categories, *varṇas* (classes) and *āśramas* (stages).[43] If, therefore, the people are to constitute a State, every member of each of the *varṇas* (no matter what their number and their occupations) must have to observe the *Ordnung*, system or discipline, i.e. perform the

[41] VIII. 335. [42] I. ; IV. [43] *Kām* , II 18 35.

duties (*svadharma*) of his 'station' at each of the four *āśramas* or periods of life. Thus, the soldier at the front must 'do or die', the young man while at school must practise continence, the king must keep to the coronation oath, and so forth. This is the doctrine of *varṇāśrama*, the counterpart of the Platonic correlation of 'virtue' and status.

As soon as the people are organized into a State, be it in any part of the world or in any epoch of history, *varṇāśrama* spontaneously emerges into being. It is inconceivable, in this theory, that there should be a State and yet no *varṇāśrama*. To say that the State has been born, and yet the various orders or classes of the people do not follow *dharma* would indeed be a contradiction in terms, a logical absurdity. *Svadharma* (*Recht*) leads inevitably to *varṇāśrama* (*Ordnung*). The two are relative terms. In Koellreletter's terminology[44] *der Rechtsstaat* is at the same time *der Ordnungsstaat*. They indicate coexistent phenomena in the social world. In other words, the doctrine of *varṇāśrama* is a corollary to that of *dharma* as duty, *varṇāśrama* is but *svadharma* writ large.

The non-existence of *varṇāśrama* is possible only under conditions of the non-performance of duty. Suppose the *varṇas* do not follow *dharma*, e.g. the soldier flies from the enemy in a cowardly manner, the husband does not maintain the wife, the judge encourages the fabrication of false evidence, the king violates the *samaya* or compact with his subjects, and so forth; then, according to Śukra,[45] the offenders are to be rectified by the *daṇḍa* of the State. This is the supreme moment for the exercise of *aiśvarya* (sovereignty) and *Staatsräson* (interests or reasons of the State). Why, even the king is not immune from penalty. Rather, as Manu[46] declares 'the settled rule', where 'a common man would be fined one *kārṣāpaṇa*, the king shall be fined one thousand'. Really, a State is no State unless it can enforce as duty the *dharma* that it has enacted as law. This should be postulated in the irreducible minimum of the State's functions. One can therefore easily understand with Kāmandaka[47] why, if *dharma* is violated by the members of the State, there is bound to be a *pralaya* or dissolution of the world. Verily, with the extinction of *varṇāśrama* there is a reversion to *mātsya-nyāya*. The violation of *svadharma* and of *varṇāśrama* brings back the 'state of nature', and the State automatically ceases to exist.

Varṇāśrama, though obviously an ethnico-economic and a socio-pedagogic term, is thus fundamentally a political concept. It is an indispensable category in an organic theory of the State. It is identical with *rāṣṭra* from the demographic (*prajā* or population) aspect. The doctrine of *varṇāśrama* is, therefore, the doctrine of *rāṣṭra* minus the doctrine of

[44] *Deutsches Verfassungsrecht* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 11-5
[45] IV. [46] VIII. 336. [47] II. 34.

ownership; and further, the doctrine of *dharma* (as law and duty) applied to the total *prakṛti* (or members of the State) coincides with the doctrine of classes and stages. The doctrine of *varṇāśrama*, then, is clearly an integral part in a consistent philosophy of politics.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAṆḌALA (GEOPOLITICAL SPHERE)

The conception of 'external' *aiśvarya* (sovereignty) was well established in the Hindu philosophy of the State. The Hindu thinkers not only analysed sovereignty with regard to the constituent elements in a single State, they realized also that sovereignty is not complete unless it is external as well as internal, that is, unless the State can exercise its internal authority unobstructed by, and independently of, other States. The doctrine of independence (*svārājya, aparādhīnatva*), implied in this conception of external sovereignty, was obviously the foundation of the theory of the State in relation to other States. And it gave rise to certain categories of *droit des gens* or *jus gentium*, i.e. right of the people, which normally influenced Hindu political thinking from at least the fourth century B.C. These concepts can more or less be grouped under the doctrine of *maṇḍala*, i.e. sphere or circle (of influence, interests, ambitions, enterprise, and the like). Using the expression of Karl Haushofer, one may describe this *maṇḍala* as a complex of 'geopolitical' relations,[48] i.e. all those situations relating to boundaries and the contacts with foreign races which every statesman must carefully attend to.

This doctrine of *maṇḍala*, underlying as it does the Hindu idea of the 'balance of power', pervades the entire speculation on the subject of international relations. It is hinted at by Śukra[49] and referred to by Manu.[50] Kāmandaka has devoted Chapter VIII entirely, to the topic. It has been exhaustively treated by Kautilya.[51] We are not concerned here with the doctrine as such; we shall only study it in its bearing on the theory of sovereignty.

First, then, in regard to the doctrine of *vijigīṣu* (the aspirant to conquest). According to Kautilya, it is the ambition of each State to acquire 'strength and happiness' for the people. The *élan vital* (fundamental urge) of a ruler, in Kāmandaka's conception also, lies in the 'aspiration to conquer'.[52] The King, says he, should establish in himself the *nābhi* (or centre of gravity) of a system. He should become the lord of a *maṇḍala*. It is part of his duty to try to have 'a full sphere around him', just as the

[48] K. Haushofer, *Geopolitik der Pan Indien* (Berlin, 1931); K. Haushofer (Ed.), *Raumüberwindende Mächte* (Leipzig, 1934), Henning, *Geopolitik* (Leipzig, 1931), B. K. Sarkar, 'Haushofer's Cult of Geopolitik' (*Calcutta Review*, April 1934)

[49] IV.

[50] VII 154, 156, 207

[51] VI. 2.

[52] *Kām*., VIII 1, 3, 6

'moon is encircled by a complete orb'. The 'full sphere' is, of course, the circle of States related to the aspirant to conquest as allies, enemies, and neutrals. Perpetual 'preparedness' must therefore be the first postulate of *Realpolitik* in Hindu theory. 'One should be ever ready with *daṇḍa* (the "mailed fist"),' declares Manu[53] quite seriously, 'should always have one's might in evidence and policies well guarded, as also be ever on the look-out for the enemy's holes'. Further, one should 'bring to subjection all those elements that are obstacles to the career of triumph'.

The *rationale* of this preparedness is very simple indeed. It is as elemental as human blood itself. It goes without question in the *Śukra-Nītisāra*[54] that 'all rulers are unfriendly,' nay, they are 'secret enemies to those who are rising, vigorous, virtuous, and powerful'. Further, in Hindu political philosophy, the essence of foreign politics lies only in the conflicting relations or rivalries of the peoples. 'What wonder in this?', asks Śukra, and his solution is given in another query which carries its own answer: viz. 'Are not the rulers covetous of territory?' Such being the data of international psychology, Kāmandaka[55] frankly suggests that 'in order to do away with one's enemies their kith and kin should be employed' whenever possible. For is not poison counteracted by poison, diamond cut by diamond, and the elephant subdued by the elephant? 'Fishes, again, swallow fishes, similarly relatives.' The *Rāmāyaṇa* is cited in the *Kāmandakīya-Nītisāra* for a corresponding precedent in diplomatic tactics. The fact is well known that in order to overthrow Rāvaṇa his brother Bibhīṣaṇa was exploited by Rāma.

The theorists who propounded the cult of *vijigīṣu* would have been in good company with the philosophers of ancient Greece. In Aristotle's postulate of 'natural' slaves, 'natural' masters, 'natural' wars, and so forth, the writers of Nīti-śāstras could easily find a place for the 'natural' aspirations, 'natural' allies, and 'natural' enemies of their doctrine of *maṇḍala*. The *Politica* assumes that the 'barbarians', or non-Greeks, were intended by nature to be slaves[56] and ruled by the Greeks. And since slaves are 'property' like 'other things', warfare with the object of making slaves and thus acquiring wealth is a legitimate and 'naturally just' occupation.[57] The opinions adumbrated in the Nīti-śāstras are in any case neither exclusively Oriental nor exclusively mediaeval or primitive. Nor need they be dubbed exclusuively Machiavellian. For has not the *Prince* furnished the fundamental logic of statesmen from the Athenian Pericles and Macedonian Philip down to the Metternichs, Bismarcks, and Cavours of our own times? It is on such considerations that, like Machiavellism,

[53] VII. 102, 107. [54] IV. [55] VIII. 58, 67.
[56] I. 2, 6 [57] I. 8.

the doctrine of *vijigīṣu* maintains its legitimate place in a theory of international relations. It provides an unvarnished statement of the only hypothesis, namely, that of *Staatsräson*, which can satisfactorily explain the innate militarism that the human world inherits from 'beasts and birds'.

Let us now examine the other aspects of the doctrine of *maṇḍala*. The 'proper study' of the *vijigīṣu* is, according to the *Manu Saṁhitā*,[58] his own and his enemy's spheres—the politics of his boundaries. And how are these spheres located in his imagination? Śukra[59] gives a brief summary of the investigations of the aspirant to conquest as to the 'balance of forces' or 'conjuncture of circumstances' with a view to the 'next war'. We are told that the enemies diminish in importance according as they are remote from the 'centre of the sphere'. First to be dreaded by the *vijigīṣu* are those who are situated around or very near to his own State, then those who live farther away, and so on. With the remoteness of location, enmity, hatred or rivalry naturally declines. Whether a State is to be treated as inimical, indifferent or friendly depends *per se* on its propinquity or distance. The *Śukra-Nītisāra*[60] gives another order in which the States may be distributed. According to this computation, first are situated the enemies, then come the friends, next the neutrals, and the most remote on all sides are the enemies again.

These are the elementary principles of international dealings of which elaborate accounts are given in the writings of Kauṭilya and Kāmandaka. The theory holds that there is a hypothetical tug-of-war always being fought between the *vijigīṣu* and his *ari* (the enemy). These two are the combatants or belligerents. Along with these are to be counted another two States in order to furnish a logical completeness to the hypothesis. The quartet consists of the following members:[61] (1) The *vijigīṣu*: the aspirant to conquest, e.g. an Alexander bent on conquering. (2) The *ari* (the enemy): the one who is situated anywhere immediately on the circumference of the aspirant's territory. (3) The *madhyama* (the mediatory, middling or medium-power State): the one located close to the aspirant and his enemy, and capable of helping both the belligerents, whether united or disunited, or of resisting either of them individually. (4) The *udāsīna* (the towering or the highest State): the one (situated beyond the first three) very powerful and capable of helping the aspirant, the enemy and the *madhyama*, together or individually, or resisting any of them individually. These four states, then, constitute the smallest unit of international grouping—the 'geopolitical' complex, so to say. From the standpoint of the *vijigīṣu*, all other States are either his own allies or the

[58] VII. 154. [59] IV. [60] IV
[61] *Manu*, VII. 156; *Kām*., VIII. 20; *Kauṭ*., VI. 2.

allies of his enemy. Such States are held to be eight in number according to the hypothesis. How, now, is the 'aspirant' to select his own allies from the crowd? He need only study the geographical position of these States with reference to the belligerents, i.e. to himself and to his enemy.

The *madhyama* (the middling) and the *udāsīna* (the highest) may be neglected by the aspirant to conquest for the time being, in his calculation of the possible array of forces directly allied or inimical to his career of conquest. The two belligerents, with the eight others (divided in equal proportion as their allies *in potentia*) are then located in the following order of *entente cordiale* by Kāmandaka[62] and Kauṭilya.[63] The 'aspirant' occupies, of course, the hypothetical centre. Next to his front is the 'enemy'. Now we have to calculate frontwards and rearwards. Next to the 'enemy' is situated (1) the aspirant's ally, next to that is (2) the enemy's ally, next (3) the ally of the aspirant's ally, and last (4) the ally of the enemy's ally. Rearwards from the aspirant: First is situated (1) the rearward enemy, next is (2) the rearward ally, then comes (3) the ally of the rearward enemy, and last (4) the ally of the rearward ally. In this scheme we have the 'geometry' or 'formal' morphology of *soziale Beziehungen* (social stringing) from the international standpoint.

It is to be observed that the doctrine of *maṇḍala* as developed by the Hindu philosophers is 'geopolitically' too naïve and elementary, because the only factor that has been considered is the geographical propinquity or distance. They have considered neither the race (or blood) question nor the religious, linguistic or other cultural forces, nor of course the economic factors. And yet this almost puerile-looking, one-sided 'geometry' of diplomatic planning possesses a profound importance in political speculations as well as applied politics.

Be that as it may, we have to observe that the group of ten States or a *decennium* constitutes one complete *maṇḍala*. The *vijigīṣu* is the centre of gravity of this sphere. Now each State can have the same legitimate aspiration, that is, each can be fired by the same ambition to form and figure out a sphere of its own. The inevitable result is a conflict of interests, a pandemonium of the aspirants to conquest united in discord. The problem of statesmen in each State is to find out the methods of neutralizing the policies of others by exploiting the enemies of its rivals in its own interests. The doctrine of *maṇḍala* thus makes of Nīti-śāstra or political science essentially a science of enmity, hatred, espionage, and intrigue, as understood by Schmidt and Spengler, and an art of the thousand and one methods of preparedness for 'the next war'.

[62] VIII. 16.
[63] VI. 2.

THE DOCTRINE OF SARVABHAUMA (WORLD-SOVEREIGN)

The Hindu theory of sovereignty did not stop, however, at the doctrine of a universal *mātsya-nyāya*, i.e. of a world in which each State was at war with all. It generated also the concept of universal peace through the establishment of a *Weltherrschaft* (world-monarchy), as in the French chauvinist Pierre Dubois's *De Recuperazione Terre Sancte* (1307) or in the Italian mystic patriot Dante's *De Monarchia*.[64] The doctrine of *maṇḍala* as a centrifugal force was counteracted by the centripetal tendencies of the doctrine of *sārvabhauma* (the ruler over the whole earth). In this theory of the world-State we are presented with the concept of what may be called *Pax Sarvabhaumica*. 'Monarchy at its highest', we read in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[65] 'should have an empire extending right up to the natural boundaries; it should be territorially all-embracing up to the very ends uninterrupted, and should constitute and establish one State and administration up to the seas'. In their 'geopolitical' planning the ancient theorists were evidently thinking of the Indian continent as identical with the entire world.

Hindu political thought produced several other categories to express the same idea of the world-State or universal sovereignty. We have, first, the doctrine of *cakravartin*. It indicates that the *cakra* or wheel of the State-chariot rolls everywhere without obstruction. The wheel is the symbol of sovereignty. It is this conception of a political 'dominion', of a secular overlordship, that is employed metaphorically with a spiritual significance in the conception of the Lord Buddha as *cakravartin*. 'A king I am, Sela,' says the Buddha, using the language of his contemporary imperialists, 'the king supreme of righteousness. The royal chariot-wheel in righteousness do I set rolling—that wheel which no one can turn back.'[66]

Secondly, we have the doctrine of *sārvabhauma* expressed in the more popular and conventional conception of *samrāj*. The *Mahābhārata*, for instance, uses this category in order to convey the idea of a world dominion. 'There are *rājās* (kings) in every home (State) doing what they like,' we read in the *Sabhāparvan*, 'but they have not attained to the rank of *samrāj*; for that title is hard to win.'[67] And this rank is at last won by Yudhiṣṭhira, who would thus be the Veltro of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, so to say.

Another category in which the doctrine of *sārvabhauma* is manifest is that of *cāturanta*, of which Kauṭilya[68] availed himself in order to establish his ideal of imperial nationalism. The *cāturanta* State is that whose authority extends up to the remotest *antas* (limits) of the *catur* (four)

[64] I. 4, 8, 10.
[65] VIII. 4. 1.
[66] 'Sela-sutta' in *Sutta-nipāta*, III. 7. 7.
[67] *Mbh.*, II. 15. 2.
[68] I. 5, 7.

quarters. The ruler of such a State enjoys the whole earth with none to challenge his might. In the *Arthaśāstra*, he is known also as *cakravartin*, for the territory of such a *cāturanta* is called *cakravartī-kṣetra* (dominion of a *cakravartin*).

The *sārvabhauma*, *cakravartin*, *samrāj*, or *cāturanta* of Hindu political theory is identical with the *dominus omnium*, or lord of *universitas quoedum* in Bartolus's terminology,[69] the *hwangti* of the Chinese.[70] He is the monarch of all he surveys. He rules a State whose limits extend from sea to sea (*āsamudrakṣitīśa*), and his chariots have free passage up to the skies (*ānākaratha-vartman*), as Kālidāsa, the Virgil of India, puts it in his *Raghuvaṁśa*. The pretensions of the doctrine of *sārvabhuma* thus bear close analogy with the universal authority claimed by Pope Hildebrand (*c.* 1075) for the Papacy, or with that rival conception of his opponents, the Ghibelline imperialism of the German Hohenstaufens. Herein is to be perceived the Hindu counterpart of the doctrine, albeit from the monarchical angle, of a single State for the entire humanity, the futurist version of which has embodied itself from time to time in diverse forms—in the visions of 'permanent peace', or in the pious wishes for a 'parliament of man' or for the 'League of Nations', or for its antithesis, the communist 'Third International' of the proletarian world.

The doctrine of *sārvabhauma* does not stand alone in Hindu political philosophy. It is backed by several other concepts which may be regarded as its logical feeders. First is the concept of the gradation of rulers in the scale of *aiśvarya* (sovereignty).[71] This concept of a scale of nationalities or a rank of States, as 'first class powers' or 'great powers' and 'small nations' or the like, according to income and title, is essentially linked in Hindu theory to the concept of political *yajñas*, sacrifices and rituals, which are fully described in the Brāhmaṇas. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*[72] says that Prajāpati became *rājan* by the *rājasūya* sacrifice, *samrāj* by the *vājapeya*, *svarāj* by the *aśvamedha*, *virāj* by the *puruṣamedha*, and so forth. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[73] again, the office of the king is lower, and that of the emperor is higher ; and therefore one becomes a king by performing the *rājasūya*, and an emperor through the *vājapeya*. But the *rājasūya* is known to be the highest sacrifice in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[74] which lays down that it can be performed only by universal monarchs exercising sovereignty over a large number of princes as the lords of an imperial federation. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[75] also says that by virtue of the *rājasūya*, Janamejaya,

[69] C. N. S. Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassooferato* (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 22, 196.
[70] R. S. Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism* (London, 1880), p. 126.
[71] Cf. *Ṛ.V.*, IV. 21. 1 ; *Śat. Br.*, XI. 3. 2. 1, 6 ; *Ait. Br.*, VIII. 4. 1 ; *Śukra*, I.
[72] Bib. Ind. Ed., Part I, pp. 77-8.
[73] IV. 1. 1. 13.
[74] IV. 4. 1.
[75] VIII. 21-3.

Śaryāti, and ten other rulers 'subdued the earth' and became 'paramount sovereigns'. In the *Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra*,[76] however, *aśvamedha*, the sacrifice in which a horse is the victim offered possesses the greatest dignity, for it can be performed only by a *sārvabhauma* (the ruler of the whole earth).

It is obvious that authorities differ as to the relative importance of the political sacrifices, but all are united in the conception that the rituals have obviously a State value, and that it is the greatest power or the largest nationality alone that is entitled to the highest sacrifice (be it the *rājasūya* or the *aśvamedha*, or any other). The concept of *yajña*, like that of the scale of the States, is therefore an important element in the theory of *Weltherrschaft*, world-monarchy or federated universe embodied in the doctrine of *sārvabhauma*.

Last but not least in importance as a foundation for the doctrine of *sārvabhauma* is the concept of *digvijaya* or conquest of the quarters, of which the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[77] speaks. A natural concomitant of it is the idea that the *sārvabhauma* has all the other rulers related to him not as to the *vijigīṣu* of a *maṇḍala*, i.e. not as to the ambitious storm-centre of an international complex of geopolitical relations, but bound as to a *rāja-rāja* or king of kings, to whom allegiance is due as overlord. With the rise of the *sārvabhauma*, the *maṇḍala* necessarily disappears. The old order of the 'enemy' and the other States has vanished, the new order of the world-State has arisen. An epoch of universal peace has replaced the age of warring nationalities, conflicting *ententes*, armed neutralities, militant attitudes, and 'geopolitically' planned economies. The doctrine of *sārvabhauma*, as the concept of federal nationalism, imperial federation, or the universe-State, is thus the keystone in the arch of the Hindu theory of sovereignty. The message of *Pax Sarvabhaumica*, in other words, the doctrine of world-unity and international concord is the final contribution of the Nīti-śāstras to the understanding of the State, and of Hindu philosophy to the political science of mankind.

LAISSEZ FAIRE AND UNIFICATION

It should not be surmised that strong centripetal forces were wanting in India. From Sanskrit and Pali sources we learn that the conception of *fédération de l'empire* was the permanent source of inspiration to all 'aspirants' (*vijigīṣu*) to the position of the *cakravartin* or the *sārvabhauma* i.e. the *dominus omnium* of Bartolus. And more than one Indian Napoleon succeeded in giving a unified administration, financial as well as judicial, to extensive provinces in Hindustan. Organization in India under the

[76] XX. 1. 1.

[77] VIII. 4. 1.

sārvabhauma or *cakravartin* emperors was no less thorough than in China under the Manchus. The census department of the Maurya empire, as described by Megasthenes and Kauṭilya, was a permanent institution. It numbered the whole population as also the entire live-stock, both rural and urban. Causes of immigration and emigration were found out. The managers of charitable institutions were required to send information to the census officers. Merchants, artisans, physicians, etc., had also to make reports to the officers in charge of the capital, regarding people violating the laws of commerce, sanitation, etc. The centralization manifest in the collection of vital statistics marked every department of governmental machinery. The central government bestowed attention upon the question of irrigation even in the most remote provinces. For instance, Girnar is situated close to the Arabian Sea, at a distance of at least 1000 miles from the Maurya capital (Pāṭaliputra, on the Gaṅgā, in eastern India, the site of modern Patna); but the needs of the local farmers did not escape the imperial notice. It is an open question if imperialism was ever more effective in any period of European history. Candragupta's and Aśoka's highest court of judicature might have served to be the model for the *Parlement* of Paris, first organized in the thirteenth century by Louis IX. The judicial hierarchy of the traditional law-books was equally well centralized. 'A case tried in the village assembly goes on appeal to the city court,' as we read in the *Nārada Smṛti*,[78] 'and the one tried in the city court goes on appeal to the king'.

But communication, conveyance, transmission of messages, transfer of officers, etc., howsoever efficiently managed, could not by any means cope with the area and the population, except for short periods under masterful organizers. The 'absolute limit' of imperialism was offered by the extent of territory and similar natural hindrances. Even the best conceived organs of unification could not, under the circumstances, permanently withstand the tendencies to centrifugal disruption. No political organism of a tolerably large size could therefore possibly endure, either in the East or in the West. It is not a special vice of the Orient, as has been alleged, that the empires were ephemeral, and that the kingdoms were in a 'state of nature'. Rather, on the basis of comparative history, it has to be admitted that if the territorial limits and the duration of 'effective' imperialism be carefully remembered, the Oriental administrators would not yield the palm either to the Romans or to the Franks and the Hapsburgs, who prolonged the continuity of the Augustan empire by a 'legal fiction'.

A consolidated empire worthy of the name, i.e. one in which influences radiate from a common centre as the sun of the administrative system,

[78] I. 11.

could not be a normal phenomenon anywhere on earth before the era of steam and the industrial revolution. It is this fundamental influence of physics on politics that, more than any other single cause, forced the ancient and mediaeval empires of the world to remain but bundles of states, loose conglomerations of almost independent nationalities, *Staatenbunden*, cemented with the dilutest mixture of political blood.

'Regional independence' was thus the very life of that 'geopolitical' system in Asia as in Europe. It was the privilege into which the provincial governors, the *Markgrafen*, the local chiefs and the aldermen of rural communes were born. Their dependence on their immediate superior consisted chiefly in payment of the annual tribute and in occasional military service. They had to be practically 'let alone' in their own 'platoons'. Even the strongest 'universal monarchs', such as Shi Hwang-ti, Han Wu-ti, Tang Tai-tsung, Manchu Kanghi, Candragupta Maurya, Samudragupta, Akbar, and Śivājī, could not but have recourse to a general policy of *laissez faire*, specially in view of the fact that each of them had to administer a territory greater in size than the Napoleonic empire at its height.

It is already clear, at any rate, that the nineteenth century generalization about the Orient as the land exclusively of despotism, and as the only home of despotism, must be abandoned by students of political science and sociology. It is high time, therefore, that comparative politics, so far as the parallel study of Asian and Eur-American institutions and theories is considered, should be rescued from the elementary and unscientific as well as, in many instances, unfair notions prevalent since the days of Maine and Max Müller. What is required is, first, a more intensive study of the Orient, and secondly, a more honest presentation of Occidental laws and constitutions, from Lycurgus and Solon to Frederick the Great and the successors of Louis XIV. In other words, political science and sociology are eminently in need of a reform in the comparative method itself.

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THE TIRU-K-KURAL

A SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS

IF Indian culture is different from that in any other Aryan country in the world, it must be traced largely to the influence of Dravidian civilization in India. In the South, we have in manners, social organization, religious forms, and ceremonies and literature, something out of which we can infer what this Dravidian basis was. There are a few Tamil literary compositions of a very old date which give us an insight into this material. The *Tiru-k-Kural* of Tiruvalluvar is one of such books. Scholars place it in the first century B.C.

The *Kural* is in many senses a remarkable work. It is a masterpiece of brevity, and is in point alike of content and form without parallel. It consists of one thousand three hundred and thirty couplets, strung together to form three Books, dealing respectively with the first three *puruṣārthas* (objects which govern men's action), namely, *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), and *kāma* (enjoyment). The last of the *puruṣārthas*, namely, *mokṣa* (liberation), according to the Hindu mind is the final beatific and timeless state of the enfranchised soul, and it is not susceptible of approach through mere mental processes or literary effort ; hence the great author-saint preferred, so it would seem, not to treat of it in the *Kural*, but to be content with prescribing the attributes of a good life.

Of the three Books of the *Kural*, the first is perhaps the most widely known and appreciated work in Tamil literature. It deals with man's *dharma*, that is, with the duties of man both as a householder and as an ascetic. The second Book deals with policy in worldly affairs. It is not so widely read as the first, but it is full of interest for the scholar and the historian. The third Book is a vigorous plea for purity of mind and utterness of devotion in love between man and woman.

This essay is confined to a brief exposition of the second Book. That the great moralist should have sought to preach eternal *dharma* seems natural enough. The second Book, however, shows that the moralist-poet was not a mere unpractical visionary unused to the ways of the world, but had a deep insight into human nature and was possessed of great practical wisdom. The seventy chapters of that Book lay down with characteristic terseness the principles that should govern the conduct of wise and good men in the affairs of the world. Some chapters are particularly addressed

to princes and those around them, while others are applicable to all persons engaged in secular affairs.

The poet begins by laying down the six essentials of a prosperous State, viz. an adequate army, an industrious people, ample food resources, wise and alert ministers, alliance with foreign powers, and dependable fortifications.[1] The ideal ruler, says the poet, is the warrior who possesses in unfailing measure fearlessness, liberality, wisdom, and enthusiasm in action.[2] He never swerves from *dharma*. He will not allow his military honour to be sullied.[3] The wise prince thinks well before resolving on action, but having decided on a particular course, he does not hesitate, and he never mistimes. He chooses his executive with circumspection; not by affection, but by exacting standards.[4]

Loyalty, a discriminating mind, clear-headedness, and freedom from the lure of property—these are the essential qualifications prescribed for the executive, but the true touchstone for distinguishing the qualified from the unqualified is conduct.[5] The poet would have the king transfer full responsibility once he has fixed upon a man, for he says that one cannot get the full value of a man unless one trusts him completely.[6] One of Tiruvalluvar's aphorisms states that those who are not vigilant can never attain greatness—a piece of advice useful to all and not only to princes, and applicable to the problems of moral conduct as much as to worldly affairs.[7] The ideal king accepts without question the supremacy of the moral law and avoids at all times action not in accordance with it. The whole world will be at his feet if his rule be just, because he is well beloved of his people, in accordance with whose just wishes he governs.[8]

The poet's prescriptions are not for kings and princes only; man's activities in every sphere constitute his theme, and there is literally no aspect of human life that has not come into his ken. Truly is the *Kural* a veritable treasure-house from which all may benefit. One can only gasp in reverence and wonderment at the author's amazing grasp of the essentials of ordered life. Look at this one on resoluteness: 'Real wealth is the will to action; without it, riches are worthless'.[9] Or again, 'An aspiring mind is the quality of manhood; lacking it, men are but trees'.[10] Perhaps there is nothing so full of hope for man as the couplet which says that even if through misfortune the object aimed at is not attained, the effort pays its own wages; that is, honest effort is its own reward. Every honest endeavour raises one a step further in the evolution of the soul.[11]

[1] *Kural*, 39. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, 39. 2. [3] *Ibid.*, 39. 4
[4] *Ibid.*, 47; 49; 51; 52. [5] *Ibid.*, 52. 3, 4. [6] *Ibid.*, 52. 7, 8
[7] *Ibid.*, 54. 2, 6. [8] *Ibid.*, 55. [9] *Ibid.*, 60. 1.
[10] *Ibid.*, 60. 10. [11] *Ibid.*, 62. 9.

The poet adjures man not to be arrogant in success, nor pitifully grieve when fortune frowns. Not to lose oneself in pride and joy over good fortune is the means whereby strength is acquired to face misfortune—perhaps a more positive philosophy than what the *Gītā* teaches.[12] The extreme practicality which Tiruvalluvar combines with his unsurpassed idealism is illustrated by the following: 'Do not do that which you better sense tells you that you may afterwards regret. But if you have done such a thing, it is well that you at least refrain from such folly again.'[13]

The historian and the scholar will find plenty of material in the *Kural* from which to reconstruct the political life of the Tamil community in Tiruvalluvar's time. The emphasis on the art of persuasive speech shows that decisions were taken after debate in assemblies. Never speak over the head of the audience. Before an assembly of seniors, restrain yourself and avoid preceding them with your speech. What makes a counsellor invincible in debate is a convincing style, a good memory, and courage, that is, the absence of nervousness. These are some of the tips offered for the debater, tips obviously of undeniable value even according to modern standards.[14] No discussion of this part of the *Kural* can be complete unless a reference is made to Tiruvalluvar's aphorism concerning the exchequer. Wealth gives worth even to worthless men. If acquired through righteous means, wealth leads to *dharma*, but if obtained without compassion and love, it benefits neither the giver nor the acquirer. Applied to the king, this condemns cruel exactions. Besides the fraction, often stated as one-sixth, that is levied as a tax by the king on income, the following belong to the royal coffers: Ownerless property, such as treasure-trove and escheat, transit duties on imports, and what is gained in war.[15]

The *Kural* is of inestimable value to those whose work keeps them near kings. One is strongly reminded of Bacon—who, incidentally, came many centuries after Tiruvalluvar—when reading the chapter entitled the 'Dangers of the Palace'. Not too far, nor too near, like one who warms himself in front of a fire—that is how one should conduct oneself before the great. 'Do not presume on the familiarity born of long connection, and never act contrary to etiquette', says the poet to the courtier aiming at success.[16] Do we need more striking proof of the poet's shrewd understanding of human nature? One more sample of the wisdom of Tiruvalluvar. He poses the question, 'What is knowledge?' and answers thus in ten verses: Knowledge is the fortification that enemies cannot destroy, and is the ultimate, impregnable defence. It controls thought and conduct

[12] *Ibid.*, 63.
[13] *Ibid.*, 66. 5.
[14] *Ibid.*, 65.
[15] *Ibid.*, 76. 6.
[16] *Ibid.*, 70.

and keeps them both from evil. It is what enables one to understand the true import of things and not to be misled by the circumstances in which they appear. It befriends the world by fostering a spirit of equanimity. The man of true knowledge understands how the world moves, and moves accordingly. Knowing beforehand what will befall, he acts sensibly so as to avoid grief. He fears what is truly to be feared and refrains from it. A discriminating mind is the greatest of possessions, and without it wealth is poverty.[17]

ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS

A few extracts may serve to help the reader to appraise this ancient Tamil book:

Do not choose men who have no relatives. Having no social ties, they do not fear social blame and are therefore not to be depended on.[18]

Entrust work to men only after testing them. But after they have been so appointed, accept their service without distrust. It is wrong to choose men without care, and equally wrong to distrust men whom you have chosen.[19]

It is not a matter for blame, but it is rather the duty of a king, who should protect his subjects against external foes and look after their welfare, that he should be severe with those who are found to offend against the law.[20]

Capital punishment for grievous offences is like the weeding of fields, necessary for the protection of the crops.[21]

It is only those who have not learnt to speak well and briefly that indulge in much speaking.[22]

Anyone may announce a plan, but it is only exceptional men who are able to carry out their plans to fulfilment.[23]

Some men there are in whom an unimposing appearance is coupled with great strength of mind and action, like the little axle-pins that keep the wheels of a great chariot in place. Appearances deceive. Do not judge men by the insignificance of their external form.[24]

Plan with a clear brain, and when once you have decided and launched on an undertaking, be firm and unmoved by difficulties, and avoid dilatoriness in action.[25]

Good men's friendship is like the beauty of a good book. It does not lose its freshness, but gives increased pleasure every day, just as with deeper study one derives enhanced pleasure from a book.[26]

[17] *Ibid.*, 43. [18] *Ibid.*, 51. 6. [19] *Ibid.*, 51. 9, 10. [20] *Ibid.*, 55. 9
[21] *Ibid.*, 55. 10. [22] *Ibid.*, 65. 9. [23] *Ibid.*, 67. 4 [24] *Ibid.*, 67 7.
[25] *Ibid.*, 76. 8. [26] *Ibid.*, 79. 3.

Perhaps two of the most beautiful verses in the *Kural* are these:

Friendship is not for pleasant laughter, but for harsh advice, promptly to be given when one swerves from the right path.[27]

True friendship is that which comes swiftly to the rescue in the hour of trouble, even as the hand goes instinctively to hold the dress, when it chances to slip down in company.[28] (The emotion of love should approximate to the reflex action of the nerves.)

The identity of feelings makes friendship ; it is needless to meet often or be long together ; i.e. neither place nor time counts for much, but the union of feelings does.[29]

Do not think thoughts that damp enthusiasm. Do not befriend those who weaken you in difficult situations.[30]

It is a gain by itself if one gets away from the friendship of fools.[31]

There are some who seek to befriend you at home and in private, but who attack your fair name on public occasions. Avoid all advances on the part of such people.[32] (Politics must have been fairly 'advanced' to bring out the need for such advice.)

Learning and culture have no effect on hatred. They do not help to remove enmity. (How true!) The mind has a capacity for dividing itself into compartments, so that unreasoned hatred persists along with learning and philosophy.[33]

Bad character is more indecent than any part of the body. It is folly to imagine that by wrapping oneself in clothes one has covered one's indecency, when the greater indecency of a bad character is still exposed.[34]

If you have no allies and are faced with two enemies, immediately become reconciled with one of them and make him a fast friend.[35]

When you are down in luck, make neither friends nor foes ; be neutral even as regards those whom you have found reason either to trust or to distrust.[36]

To show reason to one who is drunk is like holding a light to search for a man who is drowned in deep water ; that is to say, the light of reason cannot pierce the darkness of a drunkard's mind. The poison has bereft him of the power of response to reason.[37]

Gambling, even if you win, is a thing to be avoided. Such winning is like a fish swallowing the hook.[38]

To those who cannot laugh, this big world is all darkness even during the day, i.e. joy is the light that lightens the world.[39]

[27] *Ibid.*, 79. 4. [28] *Ibid.*, 79. 8. [29] *Ibid.*, 79. 5.
[30] *Ibid.*, 80. 8. [31] *Ibid.*, 80. 7. [32] *Ibid.*, 82. 10
[33] *Ibid.*, 83. 3. [34] *Ibid.*, 85. 6. [35] *Ibid.*, 88. 5.
[36] *Ibid.*, 88. 6. [37] *Ibid.*, 93. 9. [38] *Ibid.*, 94. 1.
[39] *Ibid.*, 100. 9

It is the men of valour who bear the responsibility of the many, not only in the battlefield but in peace also, wherein the braver and more capable members take upon themselves the burden of working for the community.[40]

The man who makes up his mind to reform his community must be prepared for unmitigated suffering and give up his whole earthly existence to it. He must look upon his body as a receptacle to hold griefs and sufferings for the benefit of others.[41]

All reform is built on the consecrated suffering of the reformers. That sorrow is the only immediate reward of public service, or rather that suffering is the way of service, is recognized here in a remarkable manner.

[40] *Ibid.*, 103. 7.

[41] *Ibid.*, 103. 9

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THE INDIAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

INTRODUCTORY

THE most salient feature of Indian social tradition or cultural history is its long and unbroken continuity. No country in the West has a similar tradition. In the East China and Japan alone possess it. India has received peoples from outside for thousands of years, but this age-long contact of varied cultures has never resulted in a conflict so severe that one culture attained survival by the complete annihilation or suppression of the others. A cultural compromise was always effected between the old and indigenous on the one hand, and the new and foreign on the other, so that elements of all the cultures have survived in the resultant tradition. This process was helped by polytheism and its logical concomitant—an attitude of tolerance towards other gods, other creeds, and other customs.

The peculiarities of the cultural process in India are responsible for the relative importance which different social institutions have for the life of the individual. Because of infinite variety in the patterns of social institutions and an almost complete lack of a central agency of social control either in the shape of political power or a well-organized church, the institutions of the family have been strengthened beyond all others, and the sentiments relating to family life have become all-powerful. By the family is generally meant the extended family, where kinship is reckoned through the blood-bond and marital connection. The institution next in importance is the caste system, which is an extension of the principle of the blood-bond and marriage relationship, but leads also to the civic unit of the village and is thus a link between the familial and the regional principles of social grouping. The village is the basic civic unit in which the family and caste function as representing hereditary ownership of land and of certain types of work for the community from times immemorial. Villages have been grouped into certain natural regions, which were also the regions beyond which marriages were generally not allowed. These regions were again grouped into bigger cultural and linguistic regions. The folk consciousness was alive to the cultural unity of the linguistic regions from about the ninth century and in some cases even earlier. And above all these, there has always been a keen sense of the cultural heritage and unity of the whole of India. The sacred places which pilgrims should visit have been

enumerated for the last fifteen hundred years, and they all lie within the geographical limits of India and extend from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and Gauhati in Assam to Dwaraka in the west.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY

In Indian social evolution the family has always meant the joint family made up of many generations of collateral relatives living under one roof and sharing a common heritage. In the North such a family is patriarchal, in the extreme south-west it is matriarchal, and between these geographical and cultural extremities are to be seen all variations leading from one type to the other.

Among people living in the foot-hills of the Himalayas, in the region of Jaunsar and Bewar, the prevalent pattern is that of the joint patriarchal family. These people call themselves Kṣatriyas, profess the Hindu religion, and worship Hindu gods. They are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as the Khasas. The joint family is made up of all brothers and their children living together. The eldest brother is the head of the family, holds the family lands, is responsible for feeding and clothing the family, and expects and gets obedience from all. The wife of the eldest brother becomes automatically the wife of all the other brothers. The land belongs to all, but is held by the eldest and is never divided. The children are assigned to different brothers by a convention that the eldest child belongs to the eldest brother, the second to the next, and so on.

Hindu tradition relates that before the time of the great lawgiver Manu, inheritance in property and succession to office vested solely in the eldest son. There are certain passages in the *Ṛg-Veda* and the *Atharva-Veda* which refer to the act of a younger brother's marrying before an elder one as a great sin on the part of all the members of the family. These would therefore suggest that the eldest son not only alone inherited the property and succeeded to the office of his father but that he also had alone the right to marry first.

South of the Himalayan range, the whole of the river system fed by the Himalayas comprises a region where languages derived from Sanskrit are spoken, and where patriarchal institutions prevail. In the Punjab, Sind, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, and parts of Orissa, the family pattern is that of a patriarchal, patrilocal joint family. The property is held jointly by the male descendants of a common ancestor, but in this the ownership of each living male and even of unborn heirs is recognized, and elaborate rules of succession and partition exist for the eventuality of a split in the family. Each male has his own independent wife or wives. Within a big household, every child knows his own father and mother, though kinship

terminology and certain customary behaviours point to an ancient usage similar to that of the Khasas. In this whole region a woman is not allowed to speak with the elder brother of her husband; she must not uncover her head before him. In Bengal a man may not enter the inner apartments of the house, if the wife of the younger brother is alone there. On the other hand, the relations of a woman with the younger brother of her husband are of complete familiarity. In modern times this relationship is depicted as that between elder sister and younger brother or between mother and son. But folk-songs and proverbs and older literature leave no doubt at all that the relationship was that between lovers. In the whole of this region, children of father's brother or sister and mother's brother or sister are called brothers and sisters, and marriage among them is strictly prohibited. It is customary among certain castes to avoid altogether the marriage of a boy or girl in the family bearing the *gotra* of their maternal uncle's family. This avoidance of the maternal uncle's *gotra* (clan among the non-Brāhmaṇas) is a peculiarity of the northern plains. Thus the present family institution, marriage practices, kinship systems and terms, taboos, and familiar relationship all point to a patriarchal system with junior levirate as the starting point in the near past and perhaps fraternal polyandry and patriarchal household in the distant past.

The region south of the northern plains comprises Rajputānā, Kathiawar, Gujarat, the central highlands of the broken Vindhya range and the forest belt, with its western extension in the Aravali and Satpura, and eastern extension in the Chattisgarh plateau, old Baster State, and Sironcha hills. This region is a physical and cultural barrier between the North and South, though great and historically important corridors of migrations exist, which have carried people from the North to the South and vice versa. This is also a region for the cultural isolation and preservation for primitive peoples, and lastly it is a region of culture-contact. One finds here the purely northern cultural pattern existing side by side with the purely southern, and in a majority of cases a blend of the North and South.

In Rajputānā, Gujarat, and Kathiawar the predominant pattern for family institutions and marriage is that of the northern plains. The kinship terminology is analogous to that of the North, with the same behaviour pattern for a woman and her husband's younger brother. Folk-songs, folk-tales, and proverbs make clear the sexual implications of this relationship though today among the majority of castes sexual licence between these two relatives is frowned upon and a widow's marriage with her younger brother-in-law is not allowed. There are however castes which allow such a marriage and a Gujarati word *diyer vatu* exists for such a relationship. Thus the region

would have belonged to the northern Kultur-Kreis but for an aberrant custom which is followed by a number of castes. This custom is cross-cousin marriage. Among Rajputs, Kathis, and other fighting castes, and fisher folk a man may marry his mother's brother's daughter. This is distinctly a southern custom. Whether it was borrowed from the South or from the primitive people or brought by these people from outside India cannot be determined at present. The other type of cross-cousin marriage, the marriage of a man with his father's sister's daughter, is not looked upon as auspicious and does not take place. This taboo is due to the institution of hypergamy. Hypergamy is best explained as the custom by which a man is allowed to marry a woman of an inferior social status, but a woman is not allowed to contract marriage with a man of a socially inferior group. In Rajputānā, Kathiawar, and North Gujarat certain related castes are grouped in such a way that one caste can give its daughter to the others in marriage but may not receive daughters from them. So also Rajput clans are ranged in hierarchical groups. This hypergamy also suggests that the peoples of this region are not made up of homogeneous tribal elements but very possibly are of a mixed origin representing the conquerors and the conquered.

Among the primitive tribes which have their stronghold in this region, the same type of cultural ambivalence is found. The Bhils, the Baigas and Gonds, the Korkus, the Savaras, etc. all allow cross-cousin marriage without the restriction found among the Rajputs, though even among these people the marriage of a boy to his maternal uncle's daughter is more frequent. These tribes also practise levirate. The marriage of classificatory grandfather and grand-daughter is also recorded for Gonds, Baigas, Korkus, etc. and is supposed to be of Austric origin. The primitive tribes of this region are connected with those in the Santhal Parganas and Singbhum in the north-east and Khonds in the south-east. Bhils and Gonds speak dialects of Sanskritic and Dravidian languages. The Korkus speak a Mon-Khmer tongue ; so do the Santhals. Whether all these primitive hunters and horticulturists, today occupying the whole length of Central India, speaking different languages and belonging to different cultural groups, were originally one and are now separated into various groups owing to cultural contact with the peoples of the plain, or whether they represent elements of different origins cannot be decided with certainty.

The south of this region between the river Tāptī and the middle course of the Godāvarī and the upper reaches of the Kṛṣṇā is occupied by the Marathi-speaking people. They speak a Sanskritic language and have a patriarchal family organization. Cross-cousin marriage is allowed by almost all castes, though among the higher castes marriage with the paternal aunt's

daughter is not customary. The marriage of a widow with the younger brother of the husband is not allowed. Distinct terms for husband's elder and younger brothers are found in mediaeval literature, but in modern times the distinction has vanished. The terms used for husband's brother are the same as those for a cross-cousin. Husband's sister and brother's wife become almost interchangeable terms, while the terms for mother-in-law and father's sister or mother's brother's wife, and father-in-law and mother's brother are identical. The whole terminology suggests a dual organization, which would arise if a group of families exchanged daughters for generations. This does happen in some cases, but in a majority of cases such a close inbreeding does not take place. In the folk-song and folk-tale, the maternal uncle plays a very great role. The brother-sister relationship, which is sung in all folk-songs in India, receives a peculiar meaning, inasmuch as these comrades of childhood, separated by the marriage of the sister, are united again by the marriage of their children. Succession, inheritance, and residence go in the father's line, but sentiment as evidenced in folk-literature is for the mother's relations. Except for Brāhmaṇas and high class Marathas, widow re-marriage is a universal custom. The Brāhmaṇic marriage ritual and the ritual at a boy's holy thread ceremony are inextricably mixed up with customs based on cross-cousin marriage. Thus, when a bride is brought home for the first time, the groom's sister bars the door and does not let the bride in until she promises to give her daughter in marriage to the son of the groom's sister. In the same way, the young boy, when initiated into the *gāyatrī* hymn, starts to go off to Banaras and is brought back by his maternal uncle, who promises to give him his daughter in marriage.

The region south of the Maratha country belongs to people speaking Dravidian tongues—Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam. Of these, the first three have institutions similar to those of the Marathi people with a few changes. Cross-cousin marriage is the prevalent form of marriage. There is no bar to the marriage of a man with his father's sister's daughter ; in fact, this seems to be as frequent as the other type, and some sociologists assert that it is more frequent than the other type. In addition to this, a man may marry his sister's daughter, i.e. the marriage of maternal uncle and niece is almost as common as the cross-cousin marriage. Such a marriage is also found on the southern border of the Maratha country. Inheritance and succession are in the father's line. Residence is patrilocal. A woman has invariably to live permanently at her husband's place. There are, however, some castes which practise nepotic inheritance, whereby a man is succeeded by his sister's son. In the heart of Karṇāṭak, in the Mysore hills, and in the adjoining region are met a polyandrous people called the Todas.

They have patriarchal institutions and practise fraternal polyandry. It was first thought that they were an isolated case in the South of a primitive people practising polyandry and patriarchal institutions. But recent investigations have shown that the neighbouring people of Coorg also show traces of polyandry, and a student has reported polyandry in the caste of goldsmiths on South Malabar coast. It should be noted that all these polyandrous folk have patriarchal institutions.

The south-west corner of India, where Malayalam is spoken, is occupied by people having matriarchal institutions, meaning not that women have the right of inheritance and succession, but that these two are in the woman's line. The matriarchal joint family is called the *tarwad* and is made up of a woman and her male and female descendants. The members of such a family are all united by the blood-bond; relations by marriage find no room in it, while certain blood-relations, i.e. the children of the males, are also excluded. Certain stresses and strains, which are inevitable in the pattern of the northern patriarchal households, are entirely unknown in such a household. In the northern household, women born in the family are given away in marriage and must spend their lives among strangers, while alien women are brought as brides and become mistresses of the home. The folk-song and folk-tale give vivid descriptions of the enmity and rivalry between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, and between the bride and her husband's sister. These can have no place in the southern *tarwad*, as a bride remains in her parental home and never meets, except on ceremonial occasions, her mother-in-law and husband's sister. Even in South India the matrilineal family is giving way before the individual patrilineal family, and the law has given permission to sons of joint families earning their own livelihood in professions, to found separate families of their own with their wives, where they can leave their property to their own children. Evolutionists might see in this tendency a trend towards patriarchy, but it must be remembered that it has arisen only after contact with patriarchal peoples, and more especially after the establishment of British rule. In accordance with the custom of the land, in the kingly houses of Travancore and Cochin there is nepotic succession. A Rājā is succeeded by his sister's eldest son. The Rājā's sister is called the Mahārānī or the reigning queen.

As an interesting study in culture-contacts, one may note here the family institution of the Nampūtiris. This is a Brāhmaṇa caste living in Malabar. The residence is patrilocal; the inheritance and succession are also in the paternal line. The Nampūtiri family is a patriarchal joint family. The eldest son alone inherits the ancestral lands, the house, and other assets. He alone has the right to marry. The younger sons, however,

are not allowed any rights to the wife or wives of the eldest brother. They would thus have to remain bachelors. There is, however, one social adjustment. The younger sons of the Nampūtiri Brāhmaṇas form alliances with Nayar women who belong to matriarchal households. Thus they get a wife and children, for whose maintenance they are not responsible, and who are not recognized as belonging to the Nampūtiri family. These alliances were not formerly recognized as marriages, but recently the Government of Madras has given them the status of a legal marriage, with the result that many younger sons of Nampūtiri leave the parental house to found a separate family with Nayar women, who in their turn give up the joint matriarchal family. As only one man, the eldest son, in each family can marry, a vast majority of Nampūtiri girls remain unmarried. If a man wants to arrange the marriage of his sister, he has generally to agree to marry a daughter of the house where his own sister is being given as a bride. In this way the eldest son generally has more than one wife. As a consequence of this peculiar custom, in which only a few Nampūtiri women can get married, the community is perhaps the only one in the whole of India which shows a decrease in population. It appears that the Nampūtiris, who originally belonged to a northern patriarchal polyandrous stock or at least practised levirate, as is shown by their kinship terminology, gave up both polyandry and levirate, as did the other northern Indian Brāhmaṇa communities, and on their having migrated and settled into a matriarchal country, a ready solution was found for the satisfaction of the younger sons which kept the land and the family intact. Thus the interrelation of the matrilineal Nayars and the patrilineal Nampūtiris is a curious adaptation arising out of two dissimilar cultures.

In the extreme north-east corner of India, in Assam, the Khasis, a semi-primitive tribe, show full-fledged matrilineal institutions analogous to those of the people of Malabar. The Khasis are a semi-Mongoloid people, and there does not seem to be any historical or racial connection between them and the people of Malabar.

There are a few things which need clarification in this short description of the family institutions in India. The custom of levirate has been mentioned in connection with certain regions. The reverse custom of sororate exists all over India. A man may marry the younger sister of his wife either during the lifetime of his wife or after her death. Kinship terms in many regions differentiate sharply between wife's elder and younger sisters. Kinship usage prescribes very formal and respectful behaviour between a man and the elder sister of his wife; in fact, the pattern of behaviour on the part of a man is the same as prescribed towards the mother-in-law. On the other hand, great familiarity and joking talk are the prescribed form of

behaviour towards the younger sisters of the wife. Folk-song and folk-tale describe the love and marriage of a man to his younger sister-in-law, and in proverbs such a sister-in-law is called half a wife, Even in present times such marriages take place all over India. Nobody condemns them, especially if a man's wife dies early leaving very young children. It is thought that if the mother's sister comes as their step-mother, the little ones would be well looked after.

The question of the remarriage of widows is very interesting. Until a few decades ago, it was not allowed among the Brāhmaṇas and a few other castes, but among all other castes widows could choose a new partner. But almost all the castes and tribes in India deny the right of 'marriage' to a widow. By 'marriage' is meant the ritual, sacred, and ceremonial union of a woman with a man. That can happen only once for a woman. A man may ceremonially marry virgins as many times as he likes. The words for the remarriage of a widow are always different from the words used for marriage. The same terms are used for the marriage of a divorced woman with a new mate. The first marriage always has the officiating of a priest, much feasting, and some type of instrumental music. In the re-marriage of a widow, however, no guests are invited, and the officiating priest does not belong to the usual order of priests. Sometimes it looks as if the ceremonies performed were in the nature of expiation. In the Maratha country, for example, the ceremony is performed on a dark night, and a cock is sacrificed. The same differentiation is made by certain primitive tribes. It would be interesting to find out whether this stigma on the remarriage of a widow is Brāhmaṇic in origin, or whether it predates Brāhmaṇism. That it is spread throughout India indicates that it may predate Brāhmaṇism. We have noted that even among polyandrous people a woman is married ceremonially to one man only, though she is shared by many. On the death of that man she passes automatically to the younger brothers, who claim compensation if she wishes to marry outside her husband's family. One meets with expressions like 'giving of a girl in a family' in an ancient text (*Āpastamba*). If marriage is viewed in the light of providing a bride for a certian family, widowhood is not a very likely contingency. Also, where the custom prevailed among prehistoric people of killing a man's wife so that she might accompany him in the other world, the contingency of the remarriage of a widow did not arise. When that usage was given up, the widow was simply inherited by the younger male relatives of the deceased. These ancient usages make it very probable that the difference connoted by the words used for the first marriage and the widow-remarriage rest on thought-habits inherited from very ancient times.

THE INSTITUTIONS OF CASTE AND CLAN

In all these marriage regulations there is a certain outer circle beyond which a man or a woman is not allowed to marry. This circle is termed the caste or *jāti*. A caste or sub-caste is an endogamous social group. An investigation of smaller castes easily shows by the method of genealogy that every member of the group is related to every other. So we have to view caste as an extension of the family; the principle of grouping appears to be the blood-bond and relationship through marriage.

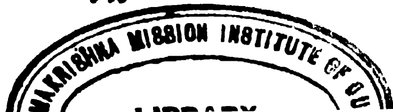
Between caste and family there is another kind of social group based on the blood-bond, and that is the 'clan'. A clan may be defined as a group of families all tracing their descent to a distant common ancestor, either male or female. Such a clan is always exogamous and has always an appellation which is sometimes used as a surname by people who belong to that clan. The clan organization is not found in northern India in the Gangetic plain, where the exogamous unit is generally the family or the village. It is also absent among certain Brāhmaṇas of Central and South India, among whom the exogamous unit is the *gotra*. Members of one *gotra* trace their descent from a mythical sage, whose name is given to the *gotra*. All the Brāhmaṇas in India are patrilineal, and so the *gotras* are also traced through the male line. Among other castes and tribes of western, Central, and South India, the clan system is well developed. The Rajputs have patrilineal clans arranged in an ascending order. The men of the higher clan may marry the women of the lower clan, but a woman of the higher clan is not allowed to marry a man of a lower clan. In the highest clan, which may have but few equals, there is generally a surplus of unmarried women, and in the lowest clan there is a dearth of marriageable girls, so that marriage is sought outside the clan group into a lower stratum of society. This same type of hypergamous clan system is found also among the Marathas. A peculiarity of the Rajput and Maratha clans is their regional distribution. Each clan has generally its own region of occupation. The land in this region is generally owned by families bearing the clan name. In Rajputānā we have thus regions in which only one clan name or surname is found, e.g. in the region round Ajmer we have the Chauhans, in the region round Jaipur we have the Kachwah clan, and so on. In the Maratha country in the Ratnagiri District, there are over forty villages whose population consists of people called 'Sinde'. In the Satara District the 'Vagh' clan has its own region, so also the 'Jādav', the 'Pisal', etc. Each has its own region. In one village I counted eighty houses of the 'Malusra' clan. The old State of 'Sawantwadi' owes its name to the 'Sawant' clan. The Chitpāvan Brāhmaṇas, whose surnames are exogamous clan-names, have also their clan-region well defined in the

native districts of central Konkan. Many a Maratha village is shared by families belonging to two clans which may intermarry; very often, however, historical records show that, in spite of the exchange of daughters, the Rajput and Maratha clans were mutual rivals ready to draw blood on the slightest provocation, real or imaginary.

Clan organization is found among the primitive tribes of Central and South India as also among the agricultural castes of South India. The clan names among the Marathas, Brāhmaṇas, and other castes and tribes may denote any object, inanimate or animate, and sometimes no meaning can be given to the clan name, while in certain cases they appear to be nicknames based on mental qualities like timidity and valour, or physical qualities like black, white, one-legged, etc. In some cases they appear to be totemistic, but in a great majority of the Rajput, Maratha, and Chitpāvan clans, totemistic practices cannot be found.

We have seen that the clans are exogamous. Such exogamous clans are included in a bigger endogamous unit called popularly caste or sub-caste. In India, the caste sets limits to the possible choice of a mate for every one. In pre-British days, marriage out of one's caste was almost impossible, except where castes were arranged in a hypergamous series. A caste is an extension of the group principle as manifested in the joint family. All members of a caste can be shown to be related by blood or marriage. I stress this point in spite of the fact that there are certain castes in India whose people run into millions, and in which, by no stretch of imagination, can a person be related to every other member of the caste. Such caste, for example, are the Marathas of Mahārāṣṭra, the Reddis or Kapus of the Āndhra country, and Ahirs of Uttar Pradesh. My investigation has shown that the Marathas include today smaller, distinctly endogamous units where intermarriage was as impossible as that between Marathas and non-Marathas. Thus when anthropometric measurements were taken, it was found that Konkan Marathas represented racial elements different from those of the Deccan Marathas.

The caste is inclusive of the clans, which, in their turn, include several joint families; while the latter two groups are exogamous, the caste is endogamous. A caste generally has a well-defined regional extension. If a few clans from a caste migrate to a distant region, it becomes a separate caste after a few generations. The Devang Koshti is a numerous caste in Karṇāṭak. A few clans of this caste have settled in the last century near Poona in the Maratha country. Today they call themselves Maratha Devangs and do not intermarry with the Karṇāṭak branch. The Levas of north-western Khandesh are a Marathi-speaking agricultural caste today. Their history shows that they have migrated from Gujarat and belonged



to the Levas Kanbi community originally, and yet today the Khandesh Levas do not intermarry with the Gujarat Levas. Even the nomadic Vanjari community has its endogamous castes in Telingana, Karṇāṭak, and the Maratha country. In olden days when families migrated, they generally made their home in the new region, took up the language and customs of the surrounding population, and became a new caste. Only the tenacious memory of migration, the caste name, the caste deity, and the names of the clans remained as proofs of its being one with the original caste. Among some people, however, the caste ties have proved stronger than regional or linguistic considerations. Such are the various Marwari castes spread all over India as traders, shopkeepers, and money-lenders. They always go back to their native places for marriage and worship. They have thus always remained strangers to the region which gives them their livelihood, and are always looked upon as pure exploiters and outsiders by the population of a region.

Under the British rule, travel became easy, quick, and safe in all parts of India, and this tendency of the castes to keep intact their ties with their native land was greatly strengthened. In spite of this we can state as a general rule that a caste has its well-defined region, not only as regards the great linguistic provinces but also as regards sub-areas within such a province. Thus we see that the Brāhmaṇa caste, which is found in all linguistic provinces, is divided into regional castes which do not intermarry. Even within each such region, the Brāhmaṇas are divided into various endogamous sub-castes according to various principles of grouping. One is the principle of habitat. Brāhmaṇas on the sea-coast do not intermarry with the Brāhmaṇas on the plateau in the Maratha country.

A caste is thus primarily a regional unit, and it also comprises people who generally follow one type of profession. Wherever there is a change in professional technique or division of labour, people following each type of activity within a profession tend to form themselves into endogamous units or castes. Among agriculturists, the farmers who cultivate cereals depending on monsoon rains form a caste distinct from horticulturists who grow vegetables and fruit and some money-crops on garden plots watered by wells throughout the year. These latter are called Mālīs (gardners). Among Mālīs, those who grow flowers only (for temple worship) are banded into an endogamous caste holding themselves as higher than all the other Mālīs. Among weavers, those who dye the yarn belong to a special caste different from those who weave. Among dyers, those who print cloth hold themselves apart from those who dye yarn. In this aspect the caste approaches a trade guild, the difference being that apprenticeship is not allowed to any outsider, and those belonging to the caste must be born

in the caste. Each craft has its own process, which the young people must learn; it has its own patron gods and goddesses, who must be worshipped in a particular way; lastly, each has its customary ways of behaviour, dress, and food, which makes it necessary that the bride must be chosen from among families who belong to the caste and know its traditions.

This brings us to another important feature of this institution. All castes are grouped in a hierarchical fashion. The Brāhmaṇas are theoretically supposed to be at the apex, and certain untouchable castes at the base. Actually, the Brāhmaṇas have not been at the top always, as historical records show. The Buddhist and Jaina monks and teachers enjoyed as great a respect as the Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇas were given certain posts like that of the judge by the kings. They were priests and received gifts at the hands of their patrons. Learned Brāhmaṇas received lands from great kings, who were patrons of learning, but they do not seem to have wielded power except in a few cases, which must be taken as exceptions rather than the rule. In Jaina stories and in folk-tales fun is made of Brāhmaṇas, and they are shown sometimes as greedy folk and sometimes as fools. For the last five centuries in northern India (especially in the Uttar Pradesh and Bengal), the Kāyasthas have been the most powerful caste. In Rajputānā the Brāhmaṇas come third, after the Rajputs and the Banias; in Gujarat the Banias form the most influential caste. In the Maratha country, Marathas have been the ruling race, though the Brāhmaṇas temporarily gained the first position through the Peśwā rule. In the South Brāhmaṇas demanded and received the respect due to the foremost caste until quite recently. After the Brāhmaṇas come the numerous fighting classes, today represented by the several ruling chiefs. After these are to be reckoned the traders, then the artisans, then the great mass of agriculturists, then the semi-nomadic wandering tribes, and last of all, the untouchables.

Within these primary classes there are ranks, sometimes tacitly agreed to by all, sometimes disputed. Among the Brāhmaṇas, each sub-caste considers itself the highest—a claim not countenanced by the others. Among the ruling Kṣatriyas, some clans are supposed to be higher than the others, and the Rajputs as a body may be given the first rank, as the endeavour of all other ruling classes in India is to show that they are of Rajput origin. Among the artisans, those who work in gold and silver hold themselves higher than those who work in brass and copper, who again are higher than the blacksmiths. The great weaver castes are higher than the blacksmiths and carpenters, but below the braziers and goldsmiths. Among the agriculturists, many call themselves Kṣatriyas, others are pure farmers, still others are apparently new recruits to farming and hold a very

inferior position, e.g. the Audhs on the border of Berar. The cowherds and shepherds come next, after these the fishermen. Between these and the lowest are innumerable semi-primitive, semi-tribal people who are gradually being absorbed into the great mass of agriculturists, e.g. Malhar Kolis, Varlis, etc. The last great group belongs to castes that receive different names in different parts of India. No higher castes can even touch them, much less accept food from them. The occupation of some of them may have led to this attitude, e.g. the scavengers (Bhangis) and tanners. The Mahars, who are very numerous and ubiquitous in the Maratha country, are not assigned work which is necessarily repellent or dirty, though they have to carry and bury dead animals (cows, oxen, and buffaloes), and that may be the reason of their pollution. In the South the number of untouchable castes increases enormously. Not merely scavengers and tanners are untouchable, but also those who tap the toddy palm, those who fish, and the semi-primitive jungle tribes have all been relegated to the position of untouchables. The number of the untouchable castes and the severity of the taboo on them increase from the North to South. In the Uttar Pradesh, the Bhangi or Mehtar and Dom may stand outside a house or the marriage booth to receive food and money-presents, which are their due on ceremonial occasions. Though their direct touch pollutes, one may drop food into their outstretched hands. In Gujarat and the Maratha country, the Dheds, Mahars, and Bhangis are untouchables, and so are the Chamars or shoemakers; even their shadow was held to pollute one. In the South, definite distances are allotted to different castes while approaching one another. The greatest distance is demanded by the Brāhmaṇas.

The number of castes and their interrelations divide India into certain regions of greater or lesser social integration. The Punjab and the Uttar Pradesh seem to have reached the greatest integration. The caste distinctions are existent, but not so humiliating as in the South. The Brāhmaṇa does not enjoy the social prestige he does in the South. The universal custom of buying ready-made sweetmeats from shops has lessened food taboos. In Central India, the Brāhmaṇas have a certain position of respect as in the Maratha country, but the great majority of agriculturists have the appearance of homogeneity and are culturally the most important group. In the Maratha country, the caste groups are numerically big, the number of castes comparatively small. In Gujarat, the process of integration has been hindered by a tendency to split up each caste into innumerable endogamous sub-castes, so that the whole society is divided into minute endogamous consanguine cells. There are thus over a hundred sub-castes of the Brāhmaṇas, and the Banias. The agricultural Kanbis,

however, are divided into comparatively few castes. The number of untouchables is small. In the extreme south, the number of castes and the minute rules of inter-caste behaviour are innumerable. At the head are the Brāhmaṇas, after whom come the agriculturists, and then many small castes all untouchable. This is the land of least social integration and the greatest admixture of races and cultures. Caste seems to be the device through which all racial and cultural elements were kept separate and more or less intact in a small region, without complete extinction even of the oldest and the most primitive element.

After describing caste as an endogamous social group, with a regionally defined extent, certain hereditary occupations and a certain place in a hierarchy of similar groups, we have to describe how the group functions. Its function as regards similar social groups, as a regulator of marriage, and as a repository and jealous guardian of arts and crafts, has already been touched upon. It divides the whole Indian population into mutually exclusive, competitive, rival, jealous communities. The element of trade unionism in caste has both enhanced and marred the arts and crafts of India. The hereditary transmission of certain skills has made artisanship and real art into almost an instinctive habit in certain castes. The feeling for form, colour, and shape is sure and unerring. But the great drawback is that it is traditional. There is neither the urge nor the occasion for new creations. All the extravagances and vulgarities of art exposed to competition and enforced to create vogues are entirely absent in Indian tradition, but it has avoided the cheap and the bizarre at the price of creativeness. It has chosen to stagnate. The same applies to learning. The Brāhmaṇas, as jealous of their learning as other castes of their crafts, made it their monopoly and cruelly suppressed all attempts at Sanskrit learning by individuals from other castes. The result has been the marvellous perfection of form achieved by Sanskrit literature in all its branches. But it soon lost its creativeness. More time was given to learning what the ancients had written, on writing commentaries and elucidations than on new creation, and, worst of all, the masses were kept jealously away from the original sources, and they had to assimilate the great cultural and literary tradition through bards and story-tellers. Caste has thus a double aspect. No social device for the preservation and transmission of culture can compare with the institution of caste—none exists either in which stagnation and social antagonisms can arise to the extent they do in this system. Much of the diversity of Indian life is due to the caste system, which jealously guards and conserves its own peculiar *mores*, dams small cultural streams within its narrow limits, and is a barrier to free intercourse and cultural assimilation.

Caste, however, has another aspect. Its function towards other groups is one of negative aloofness and self-preservation, but towards its own members it is almost a social universe. A person is born as a member of his caste, and his life's vocation, the skills he will learn, the food he will eat, and the conduct he will follow are determined by this one fact. He learns early the trade of his caste. He inherits his attitude to other castes from the other members. The caste council demands his co-operation and obedience on all major occasions. His behaviour towards the members of his caste is regulated by the rules laid down by this council, which decides what bridal price he shall pay, what punishment he shall receive for ill-treatment of his wife, whether he is entitled to divorce or not, and how much he should contribute to caste dinners. The council also used to sit in judgement on the antisocial behaviour of one caste member towards another—crimes like petty thefts, abuse, and disorderly behaviour were dealt with very effectively by the council. This power has been much curtailed since the establishment of a central judiciary system by the British. In former times misbehaviour involving members of one class rarely came before the Government judges. In this respect also the system shows that it is an extension of the family, which in ancient times had similar regulative powers over its own members. When a man dies, it is the members of his caste who help to bury or cremate him, and who receive a caste meal on the thirteenth day. Many castes own common property in the shape of big cooking vessels, wooden seats, decorative furniture, etc., which is lent to individual families on occasions of marriage or other ceremonies. Many castes also own temples and common halls where members can gather together for recreation, worship, or dinners. The caste temple or hall serves the purpose of a club for the male members after working hours and for the women at other times. These are of great use in modern crowded cities, where individual families may be housed in one—three-room tenements, and where there is no room for any ceremonial functions or family gatherings. The common hall and the common utensils and carpets make it possible for individual families or for the whole caste to come together in spacious well-lighted rooms, which no member can afford singly. The caste as a whole tries to raise funds for the free education of the poorer members, holds sports meetings or dramatic performances, where prizes are distributed, and raises money to help a poor widow or a destitute family. When a man gets employment in a firm or a factory, he generally tries to employ people of his own caste in that firm or factory. In northern India when a man celebrates a marriage in his family and has to spend some money, he generally receives about half of the amount from his caste brethren in the shape of presents at a

particular ceremonial function during the celebrations. An accurate register is kept showing the names of the donors, the amounts given, and the day and the occasion on which the gifts were given. The man or his family is in honour bound to make similar gifts to all those who gave gifts. This is called the *nyotā* (invitation) money, and the registers of these gifts are kept generation after generation by the caste council.

In a society which lacked central political or religious organization, social security depended very largely in the first instance on the prosperity of the joint family, and secondly on the strength and solidarity of the caste group. Every new invasion, every new dynasty but strengthened the caste loyalties. The system grew for over a millennium. Neither Buddhism nor Jainism could shake it. They only created new castes. Mohammedanism with its ideas of forcible conversion was so strange and so repulsive to the general Hindu mind that the whole population drew further back into its caste shell, and converts to Mohammedanism soon adopted the caste system. The same fate met Christianity. Rajput converts among Mohammedans have kept registers of their original clans and marry only among those clans, strictly observing hypergamous rules of marriage as among Hindu Rajputs. How tenacious the caste and clan memories are can best be seen when one takes into account recent movements started in Rajputānā to receive the converted Mohammedans back into the fold of Hindu clans. In the same way, in the Maratha country Brāhmaṇa Christians will contract marriages only with one another. Even sub-castes among the Brāhmaṇas converted to Christianity are kept intact. In the South, until recently the outcaste Christian knelt outside the church, while the higher-caste converts sat inside. Among Mohammedans and Christians, not only are taboos on intercaste marriages strictly observed but taboos about the acceptance of food are also adhered to. Thus a high caste Mohammedan lady refuses to be served by Mahar servants. While Europeans and Anglo-Indians avail themselves of the services of Hindu or Christian Mahars in their households, Mohammedans and Indian Christians generally refuse to do so.

The British, who established in India for the first time in Indian history a continuous central political body which kept peace throughout the country, could have made positive attempts to break the caste system, with what success one cannot venture to say, but they were not interested in the project. They, however, gave equality and certain preferences to the most downtrodden castes. In the political struggle for freedom, it became clear to the Indian leaders that the abolition of untouchability and social discrimination arising out of the caste system was not merely a matter of social justice, but a political necessity. Every effort was made and is being made to destroy the most inhuman and obnoxious practices arising

out of the caste hierarchy. The most conspicuous instance is furnished by the passing of the Anti-Untouchability Act of the Indian Parliament. And yet the question remains, will caste ultimately vanish from India? Once the injustice of hereditary status is removed, is there enough cohesion left in the caste group? Hutton remarks that the inequality of status is only an incidental property of the social group called caste. If caste is viewed as an extension of the family, Hutton's contention seems to be true. He is also justified by the history of the last few decades, in which certain castes have rapidly become alike in their status, education, economic conditions, and social ideology, and yet each caste has remained separate from similar castes.

THE FUTURE OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

This brings us to the future of the caste system and the attitude of the progressive Indian public towards this question. Almost every Indian of note talks of abolishing caste distinctions, and the opposition to it comes from the great masses of agricultural castes. This seems on the face of it paradoxical, but is completely logical if we analyse the situation properly. Today the majority of posts in higher paid government service are held by the Brāhmaṇas, Kāyasthas, and a few other castes. Political power is also wielded by these. They are the most literate and have established a tradition for higher collegiate education, which has given them a virtual monopoly of such professions as teachers, lawyers, doctors, and clerks in government offices and private banks. The abolition of caste today would mean a competition for all the above items, on terms of equality, between the already well-entrenched and highly educated castes on the one hand and the poorer, illiterate majority of the agricultural and other castes on the other. The only way to break this monopoly of the higher castes is for the lower castes to unite as castes and fight for preferential treatment. The handicapped castes must first be brought on a par with advanced castes as regards education and economic opportunities before one can talk of breaking the caste system. Today the untouchable leaders of outstanding ability can rise high only by subjecting the advanced castes to political pressure through their caste membership.

There is a feature of the old caste system which makes it necessary for this group to break its isolation. Every caste, as we have seen, has a definite sphere of action allotted to it. It may do only one type of work or one kind of process required for certain crafts. Because of this specialization each caste is economically dependent on all others. Even the agriculturist caste, which would appear to be economically the most self-sufficient, suffers through specialization. An agriculturist will tend his fields, but will not

manufacture even the simplest implements needed by him; he gets these services from the artisans. The other castes which are not directly concerned with tilling the soil are even more dependent on one another for their subsistence. And so out of these consanguine groups comes into being a real civic unit whose community life is based on division of labour and co-operation in production and distribution. The best known of such units is the Indian village.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE

The village is made up of land owners. Every family in the village owns land. The major portion is owned by the cultivating caste, and a small portion is divided among certain families for hereditary services. In the Maratha country, the majority of the cultivating families belong to one or two classes. Of these, again, one is usually recognized as the chief class, and the eldest male of the eldest branch of the chief family of that clan is generally the headman of the village and is called the Patil. There is generally one village street, on two sides of which are located the houses of the Patil family and clan. Sometimes two clans may be on opposite sides of the street. There is keen rivalry between various families and clans, and the village street serves both as the dividing boundary and an occasional battle ground. Those families whose piece of land is very small may work on the land of the richer neighbours and come to be distinguished from the chief family as semi-dependents. The Patilship is a hereditary office. A Patil is responsible to the government for sending annually the revenue of the village, for keeping the peace in the village, and for imposing small levies needed for common utilities like the village *chavadi* (a place where the tax is paid), the village temple, the school, road, and wells. He is the head of the village council, which is made up of five or ten elders representing different castes and families in the village. This was called the Village Pañcāyat, and records are extant which show that this council sat in judgement on all village disputes as also gave advice to any family in times of stress. Proceedings of the council were kept, and its decisions endorsed by the central Government. Only very few matters were referred to the higher authority for final disposal. The Patil and his clan made up over eighty per cent of the village population. Besides these there were one or two houses of Brāhmaṇas, also a shopkeeper or two, a carpenter, a washerman, a smith, a leather worker or Chamar, and a few Mahars. The Brāhmaṇas also belonged to one clan and did the work of keeping the register of village holdings and revenue dues. The work was done either by the eldest male of the oldest branch of the original founder or by all the families in turn. This officer is termed 'Kulkarni'. As he was the only

literate man in a village, he could abuse his power to cheat the poor villagers or even the Patil. The carpenter, washerman, etc. all belong to their own caste and have a family or two in the village. The carpenter, smith, and leather worker manufacture and repair agricultural implements like the plough, the scythes, and the leather bags required for drawing water from big wells, etc. The washerman washed clothes of the rich on ceremonial occasions, like the puberty ceremonies and marriages. The barber cut the hair of all inhabitants except the untouchables. The Mahars are untouchables and live outside the village. They are village watchmen, street sweepers, and messengers. They must always accompany the Patil and are chief witnesses in disputes about field boundaries. There are generally quite a number of Mahar families, and the various offices are performed by each family in turn. The symbol of a Mahar family is a stout bamboo stick, and when one family lays down its office, it is said to have handed the bamboo stick to another. Besides these, according to the size, prosperity and geographical position of the village, there may be a goldsmith, a few milkmen, a few shepherds, oil-pressers, etc. All these people are permanent settlers in a village, and a small holding is given to each original family in return for some specific piece of service. They all receive from the field of each landholder a certain amount of grain at the harvest time.

In the Maratha country, in Rajputānā, and in Telingana the cultivators are also fighters, and each village generally looks after its own defence. Its social relations with neighbouring villages are guided by the sentiments of the ruling clans. If they are rivals, the villages also carry on a never-ending feud. Even if they are friendly, it is found that many villages have a day of mutual fights which end in quite serious wounds. For such fights the villagers gather on the opposite banks of a dividing stream, and a fight ensues with bows and arrows, or sometimes even with spears. The fight goes on from morning till evening, and ends when the sun goes down. Such fights are celebrated every year even at the present day. A village is thus a microcosm of social relationships. It is self-sufficient for food, and very few articles are imported from outside. It has its own hereditary servants and artisans, its own temples and fairs, and its own games. It is visited on definite days every year by itinerant story-tellers, dancers, and actors, who provide amusement and receive gifts in kind. It defends itself, and every one of its inhabitants is bound to its soil ; but in this splendid isolation lie the seeds of its ruin and degeneration.

All that is good or bad in the Indian social organization seems to have come to fruition in the Indian village. As already pointed out, it is possessed mainly by families of one or two clans. These clans are generally

rivals; so are the families; and these feuds are carried on for generations. A study of murders committed in certain districts in the Maratha country reveals the fact that the majority of these murders are due not to personal quarrels, but to family feuds, and that they are committed by a large number of people, all relatives taking vengeance for a wrong which may have been done years ago. These rivalries are so great that if a village school is established on the estate or in the house of one influential family, it is boycotted by all those who belong to the other party. The people of the other castes, who are generally in a minority, wisely keep away from these feuds; but sometimes, if caste rivalries are aroused, family feuds are forgotten by the agriculturists for the time being to wreak terrbile vengeance on these minorities. The Mahars—the friendless untouchables—are the oftenest to suffer through such frenzies. Especially during the British rule, when all castes were equal before the law, if a Mahar dared assert his rights, he and his fellow castemen got severe beatings, and all their houses were burnt down in no time. The Brāhmaṇa, who has taken to English education and practises money-lending, is also hated generally by all the castes, and comes in for severe punishment every now and then.

Thus the co-operation of various castes towards creating a common life is very superficial. The injustices of the caste system, the caste rivalries, and the family feuds never allow common life to evolve in a village. The hereditary principle of service with its meagre wages is no stimulant to honest service or improvement in technique. Artisanship stagnates. The hereditary leadership of the Patil family, though generally liberal, may develop into intolerable tyranny. The mass of population is conservative, illiterate, and steeped in unhygienic habits. People live together for generations bound to the soil within a small compass, compelled to work together, but divided for ever by castes stratified into higher and lower ranks. The majority is not far removed from the level of primitive subsistence standards. Latterly, there has been a way out of this bondage: the most despised have found their way to the modern cities as industrial labourers; the Brāhmaṇas have also taken the same way in search of larger material and cultural gains, and are becoming more and more urbanized; these are now followed by the more intelligent and enterprising agriculturists, who are taking up professions in towns and cities.

The village today has lost even that vitality which it possessed two hundred years ago. The farmer is being dispossessed more and more of his land, which is going gradually into the hands of money-lenders and merchants, who do not form a part of the hereditary pattern of the village, have no ties of common life with the villagers, and are beyond the vengeance of the villagers. The salvation of the village lies not in keeping isolated

and self-sufficient in a primitive way, but in linking itself organically to the other civic units. The tyranny of the caste system and the village group's isolation and inadequacy to protect itself have resulted in the loss of the whole of East Bengal, which succumbed to Mohammedanism, and of major parts of south-western Mahārāṣṭra, which succumbed to Christianity. These examples can be multiplied, as they exist for each cultural area in India, and they have created new barriers for creating a unified national life. Mohammedanism and Christianity, by dividing people into believers and unbelievers, have created new divisions without in any way obliterating the older ones. It is a feature of the Indian cultural process that its contact with each new culture creates new problems and solves no older ones.

The scattering of cultural entities, the complete lack of a central political power as also of a central religious body, and the resulting isolation and stagnation have preserved the Hindu social organization in spite of the powerful attacks of Christianity and Mohammedanism. A village or a caste or even a whole region could be converted without affecting the rest. The looseness of the bond between social groups was such that if one changed over to new modes, or was lost, the rest did not feel the shock. Hindu religion could not be attacked centrally. So both the gains and losses became localized, and finally the rising tide of national consciousness put a stop to further conversion, thus preserving the great mass of the Hindu population in its age-long beliefs, customs, traditions, and social organization. These have withstood pressure from outside ; it is to be seen whether the impulse for change and reorganization from within can effect what outsiders have failed to do. One only hopes that while the changes destroy inequalities and injustices in Indian society, the essential tolerance, good-naturedness, and many-sidedness of Hindu culture are retained as the prized possession of all.

SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL LIFE IN ANCIENT INDIA

INTRODUCTORY: THE IDEALS

THE socio-religious institutions of the Indians, in their evolution, were guided by the belief in the eternity of the existence of each individual man. They took their characteristic shape and form under the guiding principle that they must help man in his struggle for the eternal progress of his soul—in his endeavours to reach, by a life of rigorous discipline and purification, the highest levels of spiritual bliss. This, it was recognized, was the *summum bonum* of life, its maximum happiness to be realized. The pervasive spirituality of Indian culture attracts our notice at every turn; from the earliest times of which we have any record, the Indo-Aryan had his eyes turned to the eternity of existence beyond death, rather than to the short-lived joys and sufferings of this world, the interests of which he did not entirely overlook. It was discovered early in the evolution of Indian civilization that the path to the final goal, to immortality, to the eternal life of bliss, lay through renunciation of material enjoyments, and not through acquisition.[1]

The basis of Indian society was a sort of realistic idealism. The practice of life was made to agree with its philosophy; there was no partition wall in the Indian mind between the secular and the spiritual, which were wonderfully blended into a harmonious whole. Social institutions, in their evolution, gave expression to the principles thus lying in the background. The Indian life in all its aspects, both in its ordinary daily course and in the more important relations, was bound up with religious observances calculated to bring about a realization of the ultimate truths by a graduated course of mental and moral discipline. Even the care of the physical body was looked upon as a sacred duty.

In his relation to the rest of society, the individual, according to the Indian scheme, lays stress upon his duties—his *dharma*—by which he is to secure his own advancement, and thus he may be distinguished from the European, who emphasizes his rights. At his very birth, an individual is born charged with liabilities, as the Brāhmaṇa works declare: 'Verily, whoever exists, is born as owing a debt to the gods, to the *ṛṣis*, to the fathers, and to men'.[2] A verse in the *Atharva-Veda* gives expression to this solicitude for getting freed from all debts and obligations: 'Debtless in this

[1] *Kaivalya U.*, 2.
[2] *Taitt. Br.*, VI. 3. 10; *Śat. Br.*, I. 7. 2. 1.

world, debtless in the other, debtless in the third world may we be; what worlds there are traversed by the gods and traversed by the fathers, may we abide debtless on all those paths.'[3] We find this sense of debts working in the Indian mind at all stages of the evolution of Indian civilization. 'When a man has paid the three debts, let him apply his mind to the attainment of final liberation; he who seeks it without having paid his debts sinks downwards'—thus declares Manu.[4] In fact, this appreciation of the debts to be cleared off, that is, of the duties to discharge, has a powerful hold over the Indian mind.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

The framework of ancient Indian society was founded upon *varṇa* and *āśrama*—a fourfold classification of the entire people into *varṇas* (castes) and a fourfold division of the life of each individual into *āśramas* (stages). We shall begin with a few observations on the part played by *varṇa* in the carrying out of the Indian ideals.

VARṆA

The Indo-Aryans were divided into three classes among themselves—Brahman, Rājanya and Viś in the earlier age, and Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya in later times. The first class included those who devoted themselves to a conservation of the ancient ideals; they were to maintain and develop the ancient ritual, which was already elaborate in the Ṛg-Vedic times; they were to probe the mysteries of the universe, to investigate the relation between the supreme Spirit and the individual soul, and besides, to find out how best to translate the truths discovered into actual practice. Therefore the conduct of a Brāhmaṇa is naturally characterized by tranquillity, self-restraint, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge, wisdom, realization of truth, and faith.[5] These selfless workers and thinkers naturally took the lead in a society whose ideals were spiritual. The second class was charged with the task of protecting the people, of defending them against foreign aggression, and hence worldly power and rulership came naturally to the Kṣatriya. His conduct is naturally characterized by prowess, dignity, fortitude, skill, presenting an undaunted front in battle, liberality, and lordliness,[6] and he must 'abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures'.[7] Sometimes, though but rarely, there was an interchange of functions between these two classes. Some Brāhmaṇa families, like the Jamadagnis and some Bharadvājas, took to fighting, and some Kṣatriyas to metaphysical investigations. Brāhmaṇa

[3] *A.V.*, VI. 117. 3.
[4] VI. 35.
[5] *B.G.*, XVIII. 42.
[6] *Ibid.*, XVIII. 43.
[7] *Manu*, I. 89.

householders of high position and great Vedic learning had no scruples in repairing to kings like Aśvapati Kaikeya or Pravāhaṇa Jaivali for instruction in truths known to them.[8] The third class formed the general mass of the Aryan people. They were the producers of wealth in the community, and formed the basis upon which the other two classes of society, the Brahman and the Kṣatra, rested.[9] The normal duties of the Vaiśya comprehended agriculture, cattle rearing, and trade.[10] In the whole social policy, the Vaiśya was in charge of agriculture, industry, and commerce, the Kṣatriya of political and administrative functions, and the Brāhmaṇa of the spiritual concerns. It was incumbent upon every member of these three classes that made up the Aryan community to study the Vedas, the great storehouse of ancient traditions and ideals, so that the people might not forget them and fall off from the standard set up by them.

The Aryan community was further enlarged by the addition, already in the Ṛg-Vedic Age, of a fourth class, the Śūdras, mainly recruited perhaps from the aborigines. Their normal function was service. They could not be expected to study the Vedas, the language and the culture being strange to them, but for their spiritual uplift they had access to the great body of traditional lore drawn up in popular speech—the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa —which had grown up as distinct departments of Indian literature so early as the time of the *Atharva-Veda*,[11] and in the Brāhmaṇas, these branches of literature are given the rank of the 'Fifth Veda'.[12] The Indian method of conversion of a primitive people is not by forcing its own culture upon them, but by a slow process of infiltration and absorption, which is still going on, teaching them more by example than by precept.

THE ĀŚRAMAS

The *āśramas* are four life stages with a graduated course of duties calculated to lead an individual, step by step, towards a realization of the supreme spiritual ideal; they are stages through which, by intensive exertion and effort (*śrama*) of the body and the mind, by acts of religious exercise and austerity, by self-denial and self-discipline, one may bring one's whole self under subjection. Hence Deussen properly translates *āśramas* by 'places of mortification' and rightly observes: 'The whole life should be passed in a series of gradually intensifying ascetic stages, through which a man, more and more purified from all earthly attachment, should become fitted for his *asta* ('home'), as the other world is designated as early as the

[8] *Chā.* U., II. 4. 3. 6. [9] *Śat. Br.*, XI. 2. 7. 6. [10] *B.G.*, XVIII 44.
[11] XV. 6. 4., etc. [12] *Chā. U.*, VIII. 1. 2. 4.

Ṛg-Veda (X. 14. 8). The entire history of mankind does not produce much that approaches in grandeur to this thought.'[13]

The first stage is that of the *brahmacārin*—the student—who has to study the Vedas so that he may be acquainted with the high standard of spiritual perfection that it should be the ambition of his life to reach, and to pass through a course of rigorous discipline so that he may be trained successfully to withstand the temptations that flesh is heir to, specially the sex impulse; chastity and continence are specially associated with the *brahmacārin*.

The next stage of life is that of the *gṛhastha* or house-holder, the mainstay of the whole social structure, and his most imperative duties are to set up a family, to beget offspring, and to progress towards the ideal by sacrifice, worship, charity, and renunciation. Placed, as he is, in an environment ordinarily unfavourable to spiritual growth, the *gṛhastha's* struggle is taken to be the hardest. As Manu observes, 'The duties of this order, which cannot be practised by men with weak organs of sense, must be carefully observed by him who desires imperishable bliss in heaven, and constant happiness in this life.'[14] But the duties of these two stages, of the student and the householder, if conscientiously discharged, would lead him to the ultimate goal, and save him from all chances of rebirth, as stated by the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* when it rounds up its teachings at the very close of the work: 'He who has learnt the Vedas from a family of teachers, according to the sacred rule, in the leisure time left from the duties to be performed for the teacher; who, after receiving his discharge, has settled in his own house, keeping up the memory of what he has learnt by repeating it regularly in some sacred spot; who has begotten virtuous sons, and concentrated all his senses on the Self, never giving pain to any creature, except at the *tīrthas* (sacrifices etc.)—he who behaves thus all his life reaches the world of Brahman, and does not return, yea, he does not return.'[15]

The householder, when he sees signs of old age coming upon him—when his hair is growing grey, and his sons or daughters are getting children of their own—should be ready to renounce the comforts of settled life at home, to retire from the world,[16] to give up all 'desire for children, desire for possessions, and desire for the world,' as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[17] puts it. He leaves the crowded habitation of men, becomes a *vānaprastha*, a resident of the forest, where he castigates the body to purify the soul, and lives upon such wild berries and herbs as the forest may offer him. The rule about confining himself to the forest is very strict: 'He shall never

[13] *The Philosophy of the Upanisads* (Eng. trans. by A. S. Geden), p. 367.
[14] III. 79. [15] VIII. 15. [16] *Manu*, VI. 2.
[17] III. 5. 1.

enter a village, not even step on ploughed land,' and he shall wear a dress of materials procured in the woods. He may build there a hut and live in the company of his wife, but it must be a life of chastity and austerity. The *vānaprastha* takes his fire also to the forest, and offers in it the daily oblations to the gods, morning and evening; he has to recite the Vedas regularly, to make offerings to the manes, to receive guests of all castes with hospitality, and to feed all animate beings; that is, he has to attend to the five great sacrifices (*mahāyajñas*) with wild-growing forest produce—fruits, roots, and herbs; he may hoard these things for a short while, but he shall not eat anything that has been hoarded for more than a year.[18]

In the last quarter of his span of life a man enters into the fourth stage, which offers him a final and certain means of reaching the supreme goal, of acquiring a knowledge of the Self, and of emancipation from the bondages of life and death.[19] He devotes himself, more intensively and exclusively than ever before, to the supreme quest of life, unfettered by any duties and obligations, absolutely detached from hearth and home, from friends and relatives, from caste restrictions and sacrificial observances. The *yati* (one who has restrained his passions and senses) builds no hut, keeps up no fire, stores up nothing (*anicaya*), and calls nothing his own (*amama*). 'He shall live without a fire, without a house, without pleasures, without protection', says Āpastamba.[20] He is absolved from making offerings to the gods or men; he discontinues performance of all ceremonial observances. He shall wear clothes thrown away by others as useless,[21] to cover his nakedness.[22] He shall not wear any visible mark of his order, nor follow any visible rule of conduct.[23] On the bare ground only is he to sleep.[24] The forest shall be his constant abode, and he shall not wander about even within sight of the village cattle.[25] He shall enter a village only in order to beg, after the people have finished their meals, when the kitchen fire has been extinguished, and when the cleansing of the dishes has been finished.[26] He shall beg just as much food as will sustain his life; he must not eat even so much as will fully satiate his hunger.[27] He is not to stay a second night in the same village, but he wanders about neither caring for this world nor for heaven. Perfect equanimity of mind he has to strive for. 'Let him not be dejected when he obtains nothing, nor glad when he receives

[18] For rules about *vānaprasthas* reference may be made to *Āp. Dh. S.*, II 9. 21 18, and II. 9. 23. 2.; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, III. 3; *Gaut. Dh. S.*, III. 25 34; *Vas. Dh. S.*, IX; *Manu*, VI. 1-32; *Yāj.*, III. 44-55; etc.

[19] The rules about *sannyāsins* are given in *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 9. 21. 7-20; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, III. 6. 21-7, and II. 10; *Gaut. Dh. S.*, III. 10-24; *Vas. Dh. S.*, X; *Manu*, VI. 33-86; *Yāj*, III. 56-66; etc.

[20] II. 21. 10.

[21] *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 21. 11.

[22] *Gaut. Dh S.*, III. 18 9

[23] *Vas. Dh. S.*, X. 18.

[24] *Ibid.*, X. 10-1.

[25] *Ibid.*, X. 15-6.

[26] *Baudh. Dh. S*, II. 11. 22.

[27] *Vas. Dh. S.*, X. 25.

something. Let him only ask as much as will sustain life, without caring for household property. He, forsooth, knows the road to salvation who cares neither for a hut, nor for water, nor for clothes, nor for a house, nor for a seat, nor for food, nor even for holy places.'[28] He is free from all injunctions and prohibitions. He shall be even-minded (*sama*) towards all creatures, in an injury as well as a kindness. He shall not take life in any form, not even by crushing a seed. He shall not take parts of plants and trees, except such as have become detached spontaneously.[29] The *muni* (man of meditation) who wanders about at peace with all creatures, forsooth, has nothing to fear from any living being. But he who becomes an ascetic and does not promise safety from injury to all beings, destroys the born and the unborn ; and so does an ascetic who accepts presents.[30] The *yoti* must live in chastity (*ūrdhvaretas*) ; he shall not enjoy objects of sensual gratification. He must restrain his speech, his eyes, and his actions. Abandoning truth and falsehood, pleasure and pain, this world and the next, he shall constantly seek in his heart the universal Soul. 'Freedom from future births is certain for him who constantly dwells in the forest, who has subdued his organs of sense and action, who has renounced all sensual gratification, whose mind is fixed in meditation on the supreme Spirit, and who is wholly indifferent to pleasure and pain.'[31] 'Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live ; let him wait for his appointed time, as a servant waits for the payment of his wages.'[32] 'A twice-born man who wanders about (*parivrajati*) after the successive performance of the above-mentioned acts, shakes off sin here below, and reaches the highest Brahman.'[33]

The last stage of the *yati, parivrājaka*, or *sannyāsin*, is meant, says the *Vaikhānasa Dharma-Sūtra*, only for a Brāhmaṇa, who, according to the *varṇa*-constitution of Indian society, is required to pass through a more rigorous course of self-denial and discipline than the others, and is thus better fitted to take up this life of absolute surrender to the ideal, taking into no account the severe physical endurance and hardship demanded of him in ripe old age. Three stages ending with that of the forest-recluse are ordained for the Kṣatriya, who, by the nature of his duties and station in life, has a greater taste of worldly comforts and power ; the last stage of severe mortification was found, for the majority of them perhaps, too strenuous. The Vaiśya, whose outlook on life was mainly economical, governed by the acquisition of wealth, found it too much of a hardship to renounce the comforts of life in advanced years ; hence the first two *āśramas* alone are prescribed for him ; he ends his life as a householder. The Śūdra, having not to study the Vedas, knows only the householder's stage of life

[28] *Ibid.*, X. 22-3.
[29] *Gaut. Dh. S.*, III. 20.
[30] *Vas. Dh. S.*, X. 2-3
[31] *Ibid.*, X. 77.
[32] *Manu*, VI. 45.
[33] *Ibid.*, VI. 85.

and none other. Nevertheless, caste is no impassable bar to the realization of the supreme ideal, as we find illustrated in the *Mahābhārata* in the case of Vidura who, though born of a Śūdra mother, was throughout his life marked by superior spiritual purity, and attained, we are told, the position of a *yati* or ascetic at the fourth stage of life, and as such it was ordained that his body should not be cremated. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra with Gāndhārī and Kuntī, however, laid down their lives at the third stage.

A BRIEF HISTORIC SURVEY

In the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *āśrama*-stages are not mentioned as such, but the institutions of the student (*brahmacārin*), householder (*gṛhapati*), and ascetic (*muni*) are already there.[34] The *vānaprastha* is not mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda*, and possibly the life after the householder's stage had not yet been divided into two grades. In the earlier Upaniṣads we find the same state of things, but we see in them the *āśramas* taking a more definite shape, though not yet fully developed.[35]

This system of life-stages developed in the Upaniṣads is found in full operation at the time when the Vedic Kalpa-Sūtras were composed. It appears that the fourth stage of the ascetic, as affording opportunities for reaching the highest state, was growing into popularity in spite of its rigour, and it seems that many persons were embracing it without passing through the regular sequence prescribed for the four orders. In fact, according to some social legislators, on the completion of the duties of studentship, one is declared free to enter any of the *āśramas* at one's pleasure. Thus a student has the option of staying in his own *āśrama* up to the last day of his life as a perpetual and professed student (*naiṣṭhika brahmacārin*), or he may become a householder, a hermit in the forest, or an ascetic.[36] The stories in the Buddhist Jātakas which are supposed to represent an early state of Indian society, show how many young men, on the completion of their education, directly adopted the wandering life of the *ṛṣi* and repaired to the sacred forests of the Himalayas.[37]

Such indiscriminate admission of men into the ascetic order from any of the other orders, without the natural gradation through the preceding stages, was likely to draw into that order many undesirables who by their imperfect discipline were not yet fitted to be there, and the social legislators felt that this influx of immature persons into the order of homeless

[34] *Ṛ.V.*, X. 109. 5 (*brahmacārin*) ; VII. 56. 8 (*muni*). The householder (*gṛhapati*) is repeatedly mentioned in the hymns.

[35] Cf. *Chā. U.*, II. 23. 1-2 ; V. 10. 1-6 ; VIII. 15 ; *Jābāla U.*, IV.

[36] *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 9. 21 ; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, II. 10. 17. 1-4 ; *Gaut. Dh. S*, III. 1 ; *Vas. Dh. S.*, VII. 1-3.

[37] Cf. Jātakas Nos. 99, 117, 175, 273, 528 in Fausboll's edition.

wanderers would tend to produce a general deterioration in the health of the society, and besides, to disturb the economic foundation of the whole social structure. They, therefore, insisted upon people passing from one order to the next in regular sequence, sought to press it home that the householder was the basis and support that held up the entire social frame, laid down severe punishments by way of penances for those who failed to keep up the standard of purity of the three ascetic orders of the *brahmacārin*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsin*, and at last pointed out that it was not indispensable for an individual to enter formally into the ascetic order, but that the highest realization was possible to a person who stayed at home, but detached himself from worldly pursuits.[38] Manu goes further than the Dharma-Sūtras by declaring, 'When the householder has paid, according to the law, his debts to the great sages, to the manes, and to the gods, let him make over everything to his son and dwell in his house, not caring for any worldly concerns. Let him constantly meditate alone in solitude on that which is salutary for his soul; for he who meditates in solitude attains supreme bliss.'[39]

To understand this attitude of Manu's code in trying to dissuade the householder from a formal renunciation of the world, we have to take note of the time when the present version of Manu's code was compiled, viz. when Buddhism had made the order of ascetics more popular and more accessible than ever before. The Buddha had founded a new order of ascetics on the pattern of the ancient Brāhmaṇical ones, but while the older orthodox ascetic order had become restricted to the Brāhmaṇa caste, the Buddha threw the gates open to all castes of all ages, and he was even persuaded, though, it is said, against his inclinations, to admit into the order women also, who, according to the Brāhmaṇical rules, were ordinarily permitted to pass on to the *vānaprastha* stage and no further. Hence the Brāhmaṇical legislators felt it incumbent upon themselves to hold up the ancient ideals and to stop this senseless rush to the ascetic orders of men and women not prepared for them by a necessary course of discipline and restraint; hence the urgent and repeated insistence on the cultivation of the genuine ascetic attitude even at home, as distinguished from the formal entrance into the order. Besides, the tendency of this pseudo-asceticism to lower the birth-rate in the community was considered a criminal breach of social laws. When a young man is about to enter the world on the completion of his education, the teacher dismisses him with the injunction, 'Thou must not cut off the line of children'.[40] Manu proclaims distinctly that one who seeks salvation

[38] *Vide Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 9. 21. 2, 23. 24, 24. 15; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, II. 10. 17. 5-6; *Gaut. Dh S.*, III. 3, 36; *Vas. Dh. S.*, VIII. 14-6; *Manu*, III. 77-8, VI. 89.

[39] IV. 257-8. Cf. also, VI. 95-6.

[40] *Tai. U.*, I. 11.

without discharging his debt to his fathers by begetting children, tumbles down the ladder of life—marches farther off from the goal instead of getting nearer.[41]

Kauṭilya in his rough and ready way condemns such a man as a criminal liable to punishment by the State.[42] Notwithstanding the prohibition by Kauṭilya of initiating women into the ascetic order, it appears from his work that there was no dearth of women ascetics in his age. The king is advised to employ an ascetic woman (*parivrājikā*) who was a poor, widowed, bold, and clever Brāhmaṇa lady desirous of earning her livelihood thereby; she would be honoured in the king's family and would frequent the houses of the chief ministers (*mahāmātrakulas*), and work as a secret spy.[43] Ascetic women (*pravrajitās*) appear to have been employed, by the Superintendent of Weaving, in spinning.[44]

On the condition of Indian society in the fourth century B.C. (when, according to one view, Kauṭilya was writing his work on polity) we have the independent evidence of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the Maurya court, who speaks of the two orders of ascetics (*śramaṇas*). Thus we read, 'Of the *sarmanes* Megasthenes tells us that those who are held in most honour are called the Hylobioi: they live in the woods, where they subsist on leaves of trees and wild fruits, and wear garments made from the bark of trees: they abstain from sexual relations and from wine: they communicate with the kings, who consult them by messengers regarding the causes of things, and who through them worship and supplicate the deity. Next in honour to the Hylobioi are the physicians, since they are engaged in the study of the nature of man. They are simple in their habits, but do not live in the fields: their food consists of rice and barley-meal, which they can always get for the mere asking, or receive from those who entertain them as guests in their houses . . . This class and the other class practise fortitude, both by undergoing active toil, and by the endurance of pain, so that they remain for a whole day motionless in one fixed attitude.'[45] The Hylobioi have been identified with the hermits in the third stage, and the physicians with those in the fourth. Megasthenes also says, 'Women pursue philosophy with some of them, but abstain from sexual relations'.[46] These may be the women in the *vānaprastha* stage who practised austerities with their husbands, or they may be ladies studying the Vedas (*brahmavādinīs*).

[41] VI. 35-7.
[42] II. 1. 19.
[43] *Kauṭ.*, I. 12. 8.
[44] *Ibid.*, II. 23. 40.
[45] McCrindle, *Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 101-2.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

SAṀSKĀRAS (SACRAMENTS)

The Indian social legislators took cognizance of the whole life of man, because, as we have said, his life was co-extensive with *dharma* (duty), and for them a man's life commenced, not with his birth, but from the moment he was conceived in his mother's womb. The sacred purificatory rites were to be performed from conception onwards, from time to time in the course of his life, up to his marriage, when he becomes a full-fledged citizen, fit to take up the duties and responsibilities of a householder and occupy his proper place in the social organization, and finally to realize the ultimate goal of human life—the union with the Supreme Brahman. Manu makes the significance of these purificatory rites very clear.[47] Gautama and Vaikhānasa enumerate forty of these purificatory rites. Gautama, however, takes care to point out that the mere formal performance of these rites would be of no efficacy in securing the ultimate goal of human life, unless they have developed in man the great qualities of the inner self, the *ātmaguṇas*, viz. compassion on all creatures, forbearance, freedom from over-exertion (*anāyāsa*), auspiciousness (*maṅgala*), performance (of praiseworthy deeds and avoidance of blameable ones), freedom from depression of spirit combined with pleasure in sharing with others whatever one possesses (*akārpaṇya*), and freedom from covetousness combined with satisfaction with whatever one may possess (*aspṛhā*).[48] Vyāsa in his Dharmaśāstra (quoted in *Maskari-bhāṣya* on the above Sūtras of Gautama) defines the eight great qualities at some length, and declares that one possessed of all these qualities would reach the sphere of Brahmā and also by the performance of the purificatory rites. Hārīta (quoted in the *Parāśara-Mādhavīya*) distinguishes between two groups of *saṁskāras*—*brāhma* and *daiva*: one sanctified by the first group of rites (beginning with *garbhādhāna*) attains to equality and union with the *ṛṣis*, while another purified by the *daiva* sacraments acquires equality and union with the gods.

There are three—according to some, four—sacramental rites before birth. One of them, *puṁsavana*, is performed specifically for the birth of a male child, but in all the other rites also, including the *soṣyanti-homa* performed just before the moment of birth, there is manifest a strong desire for the birth of a male child. The desire for a male child, so predominant in the Indian mind, seems to have had a reason. The Indo-Aryan family organization being patriarchal, a son was necessary for the continuance of the family line, for performing the necessary funeral rites, for presenting oblations of food and water for the satisfaction of the manes, and also for succeeding to the family property. Even in the *Ṛg-Veda* we

[47] *Manu*, II. 26-8.

[48] *Gaut. Dh. S.*, VIII. 21-3.

find this desire for a son expressed in many passages, some of which indicate that though adoption was prevalent, it was not looked upon with favour.[49] The *Atharva-Veda*,[50] which gives us glimpses into the secular life of the early Vedic times, also shows the desire for sons in several of its hymns, and many of these verses are used at the ceremonies of impregnation and male conception (*garbhādhāna* and *puṁsavana*). The *Aitareya Brāhmana*[51] quotes several verses, apparently very ancient, about the blessings conferred by a son. Similarly, a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[52] describing the ceremony of *garbhādhāna* evinces the strong desire for getting a male child.

STUDENT LIFE—MEANS AND METHODS OF EDUCATION

Education was compulsory for every youth of the three Indo-Aryan castes in order that he might participate in the magnificent heritage handed down by the mighty thinkers of old, the *ṛṣis* who built the Indian civilization, and specially, that his advance, step by step, towards the realization of the supreme ideal of human life might be ensured. Hence student life was a life of *brahmacarya*—of rigorous discipline of body and mind, which would harden the physical system to go through austerities without demur, and drill the mind in the exercise of the moral qualities of self-control, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. In this scheme of Indian education, therefore, discipline and work occupied the first place, and mere book-learning was of minor importance. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* distinctly lays down that the student, living in the household of his teacher, is to study the Vedas 'in the leisure time left from the duties to be performed for the preceptor'.[53] The Indian system of education was education through work, something quite distinct from mere book-education, acquisition of some truths by the learner and owned by him as a possession ; it aimed at the development of the inherent potential faculties through work —at the growth of a consciousness of strength acquired by overcoming resistance. We all know the story told in the *Mahābhārata*,[54] how Āruṇi of the Pañcāla country, failing to stop the inrush of waters into his teacher's field, laid himself down at the breach in the dike and continued there for hours until he was discovered there by the teacher, who gave him the title 'Uddālaka' as he came up in obedience to his call. This one act of the young learner was enough to convince the teacher that his education was complete, and he discharged him at once with the blessing, 'All the Vedas will come out clear to you, and also the whole literature on *dharma*' ; and whoever has

[49] Cf. *R.V.*, III. 1. 23, 5. 11, 6. 11, 7. 11, 15. 7, 22. 3, 23. 5 ; VII. 4. 7-8, 34. 20 ; X. 85. 25, 45.
[50] V. 25. 10-3 ; VI. 11. 3.
[51] VII. 15.
[52] IX. 4. 14-20.
[53] VIII. 15.
[54] I. 3, 21-77.

read the Upaniṣads knows that Uddālaka Āruṇi of the Pañcāla country was one of the greatest seekers of truth, pre-eminent for *Brahmavidyā.*

Reverence for the teacher and obedience to his behests form the indispensable requirements of a learner; the student must practise the spirit of obedience and cultivate reverence; but if the heart does not go out to the performance of the deed, it is an empty formality. A well-known passage of the *Saṁhitopaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*[55] quoted in the *Nirukta* and Dharmaśāstras (Vasiṣṭha, Viṣṇu, Manu, etc.) gives expression to this fundamental principle of the Indian system of education very beautifully: 'Science (*vidyā*) approached the teacher versed in *Brahmavidyā* (Brāhmaṇa), and charged him thus: "Preserve me, I am verily thy treasure; deliver me not to one who is full of envy and discontent, one who is not straight in his conduct, nor to one of uncontrolled passions—thus shall I be possessed of strength and vigour (*vīryavatī*). But deliver me, as to a keeper of the treasure, to him whom thou wilt know to be pure, attentive, intelligent, and firm in chastity; who will not grieve thee, nor revile thee. The man who fills his ears with truth, frees him from pain, and confers immortality on him, the pupil shall consider as his father and mother; him he must never grieve nor revile. As those scholars who after receiving instruction do not honour their teacher by their speech, in their hearts, or by their deeds, will not be of profit to their teacher, even so that sacred learning which they acquired will not profit them".'

Education was imparted not for finding a career for a boy—that was fixed for him by his birth, but for his spiritual growth; the ceremony of *upanayana,* marking the beginning of education, was regarded as a second or spiritual birth.[56] 'This birth for the sake of the Vedas ensures eternal rewards both in this life and after death', 'it is exempt from age and death'.[57] Hence the age for the commencement of the discipline was determined according to the spiritual purity each lad was expected to develop. For a Brāhmana boy who was expected to take care of the spiritual welfare of the community and to set an example of ideal Aryan life to the other three classes, this age was fixed by the Gṛhya and Dharma-Sūtras ordinarily at the eighth year from conception; but if it was intended that he should shine in *brahmavarcas* (splendour of the Vedas), that is, attain special pre-eminence in sacred knowledge, then it was to be so early as the fifth year from conception.[58] That is, a Brāhmaṇa boy is to begin the severe life of discipline of the *brahmacārin* at the tender age of four from birth. In no case should the initiation of a Brāhmaṇa boy be deferred beyond the

[55] Ch. III.
[56] *Āp. Dh. S.,* I. 1. 1. 13-7; *Vas. Dh. S.,* II. 3-5.
[57] *Manu,* II. 146-8.
[58] *Gaut. Dh. S.,* I. 5-7.

sixteenth year. In the case of the ruling and commercial classes, the final limit was fixed at a more advanced age, twenty-two and twenty-four. Failing to be initiated within this limit, an Aryan youth forfeited his claim to initiation in the study of the Vedas, and became an outcaste from society with whom no decent man would care to associate. Neither should any one accept such *vrātya* (degraded) youths as pupils, nor teach them, nor associate with them, nor form, says Gobhila, matrimonial alliances with them. The descendants of such men as have forfeited the *sāvitrī* (a sacred text) for three generations are excluded from sacraments (*saṁskāras*), and to regain admission into Aryan society they must go through very arduous and painful penances and purificatory rites, such as the *vrātyastoma*. In the Buddhist Jātaka stories we find that Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya youths who had neglected their education in early years, felt it incumbent to commence it at sixteen. The Hāthīgumphā Inscription on the Udaygiri rock records that Prince Khāravela of Kaliṅga, about the second century B.C., passed fifteen years in boyish sports, and in the sixteenth year his education was commenced.

Besides the usual discipline which was compulsory after initiation, a student had to take up special vows (*vratas*) when he studied particular portions of the Vedic literature. Thus, for example, before a student began to study the *mahānāmnī* or *śakvarī* verses forming a supplement to the *Sāma-Veda*, he had to prepare himself by keeping a vow, the *śakvarī-vrata*, for twelve, nine, six, or at least three years. In case his ancestors also had studied these verses, this period might be reduced to one year. Among the many duties connected with this vow, the student was required to wear a single cloth, and that a dark one, and eat dark food; he should keep standing during the day-time, and pass the night sitting; when it rained, he should not seek cover; he was not to get into a boat unless his life was in danger, that is, he had to cross rivers by swimming; after he had prepared himself by these and other austerities, the verses were recited to him. Notwithstanding their hardships, these vows were far from unpopular. Mothers while suckling their babies urged them, 'Endeavour, my little darling, to accomplish the *śakvarī-vrata*,' as we learn from an ancient passage in the *Rauruki Brāhmaṇa* (quoted by Gobhila in his Gṛhya-Sūtra).[59] Other vows involving a more or less severe course of discipline had to be undertaken to entitle the student to study other parts of the sacred literature, until he was discharged by his teacher.

When a young man obtained the permission of his teacher to retire from student life, he celebrated his retirement by a ceremonial bath

[59] III. 2. 7-9.

(*samāvartana-snāna*), and was henceforth called a *snātaka*. He was considered to have fully completed his education if he was a *vidyā-vrata-snātaka*, that is, if he had finished his study as well as fulfilled all the vows properly; he would be a mere *vidyā-snātaka* if he had acquired the knowledge of the Vedas, but not fully accomplished his vows, or even a *vrata-snātaka*, by fulfilling the vows but not finishing the Vedas. The first ranked highest; the other two were of equal status. The mere acquisition of knowledge without the proper discipline was not given a high place in the Indian system of education.

A magnificent address by the teacher to the student on the eve of his retirement has been preserved in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*,[60] embodying noble maxims told in words unique for their strength, brevity, and vigour. We read of this Convocation address, as it were, in the Vedic Age: 'After having taught the Vedas, the teacher instructs the pupil: "Speak the truth. Do thy duty (*dharma*). Neglect not the recitation of the Vedas (*svādhyāya*). Bring thy teacher a present that pleases him, and then beware not to break off the line of children. Swerve not from truth. Swerve not from duty. Disdain not what is good (for thee). Deviate not from (the path to) greatness. Neglect not to recite the Vedas for thyself, nor to teach it (to others). Neglect not to discharge thy duties to the gods and the Fathers. Be thy mother to thee like a deity. Be thy father to thee like a deity. Be thy teacher to thee like a deity. Be thy guest to thee like a deity. Whatever acts are above reproach should be regarded, not others. Whatever acts were good in our conduct, thou shalt respect, and not the others. Whatever Brāhmaṇas are better than ourselves, thou shalt rest by offering a seat. Thou shouldst give with respect, and not without respect, with grace, with modesty, with fear, with friendliness . . . This is the commandment. This is the instruction. This is the hidden import of the Vedas. This is the ordinance. Thus shalt thou act with worshipful regard. Thus should this verily be observed with worshipful reverence".'

That this standard of life thus held up by the teachers bore ample fruit is testified to by the account the students gave of themselves in actual life, as organic parts of the Indian social structure. We learn from Megasthenes (fourth century B.C.), that 'the Brāhmaṇas neither love gold nor fear death'. Of people in general, including all grades of persons in society, the same foreign observer records, 'Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem. They seldom go to law.' That the ancient Indian system of education did develop the inventive faculty, the power of making new discoveries through persistence in struggling against difficulties, is manifest from the mighty

[60] I. 11.

achievements in the various departments of knowledge—art, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, and medicine, and especially in philosophy and metaphysics. This disproves the fear that the memorization of the Vedas would tend to develop sharpness of memory to the exclusion of deliberate judgement. The memorizing of good literature of genuine intrinsic merit is considered even by modern educationists an indispensable element of sound education. In India it enabled the students to understand and respect their own civilization and culture, the magnificent heritage left by their forefathers.

THE HOUSEHOLDER

When a young man, after the completion of his studies, comes out as a *snātaka* or graduate, he conducts himself decently like an educated man—he 'assumes a dignified demeanour, in short,' as Gobhila[61] puts it. He is honoured wherever he goes; 'a great being, indeed, is a *snātaka*', says Āśvalāyana;[62] on the road everyone makes way for him, and it is said that even a king meeting him, shows him respect and yields him precedence.[63] He is reverentially welcomed when he visits any house, and he readily gets a bride.

As soon as a man marries and sets up as a householder, he enters a life of sacrifices. He must realize that the householder is the economic support of the entire social structure composed of the four *āśramas*. He is the bread-winner of the whole social family. He should therefore be ready to share whatever he earns with the other three *āśramas*; and he must earn it by honourable means, by following irreproachable occupations. He should not hoard wealth.[64] Every day of his life he has to offer to the gods and the manes, to feed his guests, and to give food to all animals before he sits down to his meal. At the same time, he must study the Vedas, the first thing in the morning, so that the traditional ideals handed down by the ancient *ṛṣis* might not be forgotten.

The importance of sacrifices has been great in the evolution of the religious and philosophical thought of the Indo-Aryans. The Vedas, including the earliest hymns, were compiled in their present form to aid in the performance of these sacrifices. *Yajña*, sacrifice or 'renunciation of things in favour of the gods,' as Kātyāyana[65] puts it, was the earliest form of religious exercise of the Vedic Indians. In this worship no images were required, but the worshipper renounced his claim to things by placing them in the fire and saying, 'This is offered to Agni (Indra or Soma), it is no longer mine'. The animal that does duty for him at the sacrifice stands as a substitute for the worshipper himself. At the end of the sacrifice, liberal gifts

[61] III. 5. [62] III. 9. 6. [63] *Vas. Dh. S.*, XIII. 59.
[64] *Manu*, IV. 1-8. [65] *Kāt. Śr. S.*, I. 1. 2.

are made to the officiating priests and others, sometimes the entire belongings of the sacrificer (*yajamāna*). By these renunciations he becomes prepared for the greater renunciation, afterwards, of everything that binds him to things of the earth, and for entering into the bliss of Brahman. 'Some acquired immortality by renunciation,' say the Upaniṣads.[66] Even in the seventh century we find Harṣavardhana Śīlāditya convoking 'a grand assembly' and distributing there the stores of his treasuries in charity.[67]

The duties of the householder are enumerated in every detail in the Indian sacred literature, because, as we have said, his life was co-extensive with *dharma*.

FAMILY LIFE—POSITION OF WOMAN

Marriage, according to the ancient Indian ideas, is a sacrament and not a contract; it is a sacred bond of union between two persons for their eternal progress through the performance of their duties. In the ritual of marriage, this relation through *dharma* is insisted upon. The marital union is also a divine dispensation, a heaven-ordained relation; therefore no one has a right to dissolve it—man cannot and should not separate those whom the gods have joined together. She stands beside him in life, and through death in the gladder life beyond; she is not separable from him, but a part of his very self.[68]

When the young man carries his wife home in a chariot (*vi-vah*), the nuptial fire is carried with him, and is set up in his house as his domestic fire; it is the symbol of his married life. It has to be kept up till he retires from the world; from it the wife lights the kitchen fire, in it he offers oblations (*agnihotra*) every day, morning and evening, jointly with his wife. On all occasions, whenever he makes any offerings to the gods by sacrificing in fire, she always participates and co-operates with him; it is a duty which they have in common and therefore has to be discharged jointly.[69] The position of the wife in the Vedic Age was, therefore, very high. A man offers oblations to the gods jointly in a pair;[70] they are like a pair of horses yoked to a chariot.[71] The seer Atri expressly tells Agni, 'Married pairs, worn out by devout rites, jointly offer abundant sacrificial food, Agni, to thee who art mighty';[72] and Ghoṣā, the lady seer, speaks of the loving husbands who make their wives sit down at the sacrifice.[73] The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*[74] declares, 'There is no sacrificial rite for a man who is without a wife', and

[66] *Kaivalya U.*, 2.
[67] Yuan Chwang, *Life*, Book V; Beal, p. 83.
[68] *R.V.*, X. 85. 36; *A.-V.*, XIV. 1. 51-1; *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 13. 12; cf. *Manu*, II. 29. 95.
[69] *Manu*, IX. 96.
[70] *R.V.*, I. 173. 2.
[71] *Ibid.*, VIII. 33. 18.
[72] *Ibid.*, V. 43. 15.
[73] *Ibid.*, X. 40. 10.
[74] II. 2. 2. 6.

Pāṇini[75] tells us that the wife is called *patnī* because of her participation at the sacrifice.

The Ṛg-Vedic hymns speak feelingly of the couple who are united in mind, and the gods are invoked to shower their blessings on such a pair as they make their offerings to the gods together.[76] This spirit of union comes out beautifully in the marriage ritual, when after pacing the seven steps together, the bridegroom addresses the bride: 'A friend be thou, having paced these seven steps with me; the couple who paced seven steps together became friends. May I gain thy friendship, may I never fall off from thy friendship; may thou never fall off from my friendship. Let us unite together; let us resolve together that bound in love, and ever radiant in each other's company, meaning well towards each other, sharing together all enjoyments and pleasures, we may unite our thoughts, our duties, and our ideals.'[77]

In the *Atharva-Veda*[78] we find the husband and the wife offering a prayer for unity of mind: 'The eyes of us two be of honey aspect; our face be ointment; put thou me within thy heart; may our mind verily be together'. The author of another hymn inspires the members of a family with unity of mind and heart: 'Like-heartedness, like-mindedness, non-hostility do I make for you; do ye show affection, the one towards the other, as the inviolable cow towards her calf when born. Be the son submissive to the father, like-minded with the mother; let the wife speak to the husband words full of honey, beneficent. Let not brother hate brother, nor sister sister; becoming accordant, of like courses, speak ye words auspiciously. Your drinking be the same, in common your share of food; in the same harness do I join you together; worship ye Agni united, like spokes about a nave. United, like-minded, I make you, of one bunch, all of you, by conciliation; be like the gods defending nectar (*amṛta*); late and early be well-willing yours.'[79]

The tender affection of the devoted wife comes out in many a metaphor while the poets of the hymns are speaking with rapture of the gods whom they not only revere but also adore and love.[80] The goddess of Dawn, Uṣas, resplendent in her beauty, inspires the poetic fervour of the Ṛg-Vedic seers who speak of her feelingly as a virgin, as a youthful bride decked with every grace, as a lovely wife who displays her charms to win her husband's

[75] IV. 1. 33.
[76] Cf. *Ṛ.V.*, IV. 58. 8; V. 3. 2; VIII. 31. 5-9, 84. 7.
[77] *Āpastamba Mantra Brāhmaṇa*, I. 3. 14.
[78] VII. 36.
[79] *A.V.*, III. 30. 1-3, 6-7.
[80] *R.V.*, I. 62. 11, 66. 3, 73. 3; IV. 3. 2.
[81] *Ibid.*, III. 53-4.
[82] III. 3. 1. 10.

affection, as a wakeful matron who rises betimes and wakes up the laggards, and so on.

The wife is identified with the Vedic Indian's house and home; 'The wife is verily the home,' declares a seer,[81] and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[82] asserts: 'The home has verily its foundation in the wife; and we have an echo of the same sentiment in later literature. They say, 'The house (one lives in) is not the home, the mistress of the house is called the home (proper)'.[83]

No greater calamity could befall a Vedic householder than the untimely death of his wife. The household fire now burns her mortal remains, and becomes no better than the 'funeral fire' (*śavāgni*).[84] The widower must set up a new fire and seek a new partner at the daily offerings. Two courses are open to him—either he must forsake the world and become a forest-recluse (*vānaprastha*), or he must marry immediately on the expiry of the period of impurity, if he prefers to continue in the householder's state, because the paramount duty of the householder, the daily offering of the *agnihotra*, cannot be carried on without the wife.[85] Without such marriage, he will be outside the *āśrama* scheme (*anāśramin*), and this is imcompatible with the entire scheme of organization of Indo-Aryan society.[86]

The Ṛg-Vedic hymns present portraits of a noble band of ladies illustrating the high position enjoyed by women in the Vedic Age as seers and sacrificers, their independence and courage, and their womanly love and conjugal devotion. There is no exaggerated colouring in the delineation of these characters; they are drawn to life with a few masterly strokes—in a brief dialogue, a short prayer, or even a single verse of impassioned utterance. In the first place, we may mention the dignified matron Viśvavārā,[87] a lady of the Atri family, who in her short but vigorous hymn of six verses reveals herself as a lady of forceful personality, dignified and restrained, making offerings to the gods for herself, and withal she shows her woman's heart praying for an atmosphere of love and concord in her home. Next, we have the picture of Indrasenā Mudgalānī,[88] a heroic lady who bravely drove her chariot and helped her husband 'in winning hundreds and thousands of cattle well-pastured', in a memorable conflict in which both of them took part. It is probable that the fight was with a band of robbers who had lifted their cattle, as the tradition puts it, or it may refer to a hotly contested chariot race in which the husband and the wife succeeded in winning the rich wager of cattle, as some modern scholars hold. Then again, the sorrows of Lopāmudrā[89] draw our sympathy, as she pines away

[81] *Pañcatantra*, IV. 81.
[82] *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā*.
[83] *Manu*, V. 167-8; *Yāj.*, I. 88.
[84] Cf. *Dakṣa*, I. 10.
[87] *Ṛ.V.*, V. 28.
[88] *Ibid.*, X. 102.
[89] *Ibid.*, I. 179.

hungering for the company of her husband (Agastya) who is intent upon austerities and penances. In later literature women are sometimes spoken of as leading men astray from the path of ascetic purity.[90] But Varāhamihira enters a strong protest against such one-sided condemnation; for he says, 'Those who, from the ascetic point of view, enumerate the faults of women, to the exclusion of their virtues, are, it seems to me, bad men; their words do not proceed from good sense. Speak, in truth, what fault is there among women which is not practised by men? Out of audacity women are condemned by men; they are superior in virtues, says Manu.'[91] The high regard for the wife in the Vedic Age also appears from the fact that she is regarded as the half that completes the husband.[92]

The two great Indian epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, present a brilliant galaxy of grand women—some of the noblest figures that would do honour to any country and any age.[93] And yet there is a striking difference in the types of women portrayed in the two epics. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, they are soft, gentle, and delicate—Sītā, Kauśalyā, and even Kaikeyī who makes use of her husband's love for her in gaining her ends. On the other hand, in the central story of the *Mahābhārata*, apart from the episodes, we have portraits of heroic ladies, strong and impetuous mothers of heroes. We miss in the laments of Sītā the impassioned utterances of Draupadī, in the wails of Kauśalyā the boiling ire of Gāndhārī, a single glance of one of whose covered eyes was enough to maim a limb of Yudhiṣṭhira for the rest of his life. Nor can we omit from this list the brave Sāvitrī, who could wrench her husband from the icy grip of death, and who in her youth, although exquisitely beautiful in every limb, had such an aureole of dignity about her that she looked a veritable goddess, and no young man would venture to seek her hand in marriage. Nor can we forget Vidulā, the heroic mother of Prince Sañjaya of the Sauvīras, on the banks of the Sindhu. The son had suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of his neighbours, the Sindhus, and lay dejected and low, and would rather save his life than risk another battle with his fierce enemies. But the mother would not listen to it; the words of fire with which she sought to inspire her son and rouse him to action are told in more than a hundred verses in the *Udyogaparvan* of the great epic,[94] and with a recitation of them the mother of the Pāṇḍavas seeks to revive the drooping spirits of her sons. This section of the *Mahābhārata* has deservedly been designated *jaya*

[90] Cf. *Manu*, II. 213-5. [91] *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, 74. 5-6.

[92] *Taitt. Br.*, III. 3. 3. 5; *Śat. Br.*, V. 2. 1. 10; *Ait. Br.*, VII. 13; *Gopatha Br.*, I. 1. 2. Cf. *Manu*, IX. 45.

[93] Cf. the weighty arguments of Mrs. Annie Besant (*The Dawn*, Oct. 1901, p. 82) and Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, pp. 378 ff.

[94] *Mbh.*, V. 133-6.

(victory), and is ordained to be recited to a king when he suffers at the hands of his enemies. Out of the numerous women characters in the Purāṇas, one stands out prominent, Madālasā, the queen of King Ṛtadhvaja.[95] She inculcated to her four sons the superiority of spiritual life to worldly life and thus enabled them to win emancipation.

It has been said that woman in ancient India was never regarded as man's equal, and that she was not to be independent at any stage of her life. The question requires to be examined with some care. Equality as understood in the West means an equality of rights, and in this sense it has no place in Indian thought, where life is valued as affording opportunities for spiritual uplift through duties to be discharged by one's own self, and not for claiming material comforts through rights to be asserted against others. Equality of rights the Indian sages never discuss, except as regards the common human right of winning salvation, and equality of duties for all persons irrespective of inherent differences is an impossibility, in the family, the society, or the nation.

Each unit in the whole organic scheme of society has its own function, and a neglect of this function will bring down its own punishment. This applies to woman as it does to everyone else. That the husband is not doing his duty to her is no excuse for the neglect of her own duty. Hence, even if the husband be bereft of virtues, a wife who cares for her own spiritual progress must not neglect her own duty towards him.[96] Her duty is to serve the husband, not to seek service from him.

Her duties as a mother are too exacting to permit a woman to pass through the course of rigorous discipline and austerities requisite for moral purification and spiritual advance. Therefore the scriptures assure her that if she but carries out her own duties and associates herself with her husband in the religious exercises, she fully shares in the advance towards the goal. Therefore, in the joint performance of their duties, the wife is to follow the initiative of the husband, and these duties are determined by his *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Hence Gautama[97] ordains, 'A wife is not independent with respect to (the fulfilment of) the sacred duty', and he adds,[98] 'Let her not violate her duty towards her husband. She must not supersede her husband. She should be restrained in word, in look, and in deed.' The wife can have no religious observances apart from those of her husband: 'There is no sacrificial performance, nor a vow, nor a fast for women apart from their husbands'; as she attends upon her husband, she will for that reason be exalted in heaven', says Manu.[99] The *Viṣṇu Smṛti*[100] and the

[95] *Mārk. P.*, 25 ff.
[96] *Manu*, V. 154.
[97] XVIII. 1.
[98] XVIII. 2-3.
[99] V. 155.
[100] XXV. 15.

Mahābhārata[101] quote the same verse in almost the same words. There is positive prohibition of the vow of fasting for a woman whose husband is living.[102] The respect due to the woman on account of her painful duties and heavy responsibilities as mother is pointed out in Dharma-śāstras in very strong terms.[103]

The dependence of woman upon man is also adverted to in the scriptures because of her inability to protect herself against physical molestation; the *Mahābhārata*[104] observes that she is ordinarily wanting in moral strength too; and a passage in the *Ṛg-Veda*[105] observes that the mind of a woman is difficult to be controlled. Vasiṣṭha[106] says, 'A woman is not independent, she is dependent on man . . . Here they quote also the following verse: "The father protects her in childhood, the husband in youth, and the son in advanced years; a woman is never fit to depend upon herself".' This verse is given in the same words by Baudhāyana,[107] by Manu,[108] and by the *Mahābhārata*.[109]

In advanced years, the woman is placed under the charge of her son, and certainly in India this does not imply any inferiority; to the sons she is a veritable deity. The son is even like a baby to his mother, as the *Mahābhārata*[110] says, 'A man, even though he may have sons and grandsons, is like a baby of two years when he comes to his mother even after a hundred years'. In the reverence that is her due the mother exceeds all others, even the teacher and the father, as Vasiṣṭha[111] points out, quoting an ancient verse: 'The teacher is ten times more venerable than a tutor (*upādhyāya*); the father, a hundred times more than the teacher; but the mother is a thousand times more than the father'. This is because, 'She bears him in her womb and rears him'.[112] Yājñavalkya[113] says that the mother is superior to the teacher, and even to the priest participating at the sacrifice. Even a father who has violated a social injunction and faces loss of caste is to be cast off; but a mother never becomes an outcast to her son under any circumstances.[114] Even an expectant mother is respected by everyone; she pays no toll at a ferry, like the student or the ascetic.[115]

The sacredness of the marriage tie renders widow-marriage impossible in India. The girl's father gave her away to her husband, to whom she belongs for ever; hence when her husband dies, she cannot be remarried. The father cannot revoke the gift once made. Only once is a maiden

[101] XIII. 46. 13. [102] *Viṣṇu*, XXV. 16. [103] Cf. *Manu*, IX. 26-8.
[104] XIII. 38-43. [105] VIII. 33. 17. [106] V. 1. 3.
[107] II. 3. 45. [108] IX. 2. [109] XIII. 46. 14.
[110] XII. 266. 28. [111] XIII. 47.
[112] *Brahmavaivarta P.*, Gaṇapatikāṇḍa, 40.
[113] I. 35.
[114] *Vas. Dh. S.*, XIII. 47; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, II. 3. 42; *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 10. 28. 9.
[115] *Manu*, VIII. 407.

given in marriage, and only once does a man say: 'I give'.[116] The husband dies, but really he is not dead; he is waiting on the other side, where she is sure to go if 'she does not insult his memory'.[117]

In practical life, some widows did find this ideal of conjugal fidelity too high for themselves, as will appear from the reference to the *punarbhū* (the re-married woman) or her son in Dharma-śāstras,[118] and remarriage is definitely permitted by some of the comparatively late Dharma-śāstras. 'When her husband', says Nārada (who is generally placed about the early centuries of the Christian era), 'is lost (i.e. gone no one knows whither), or dead, or is impotent or has become a religious ascetic, or been expelled from caste: these are the five cases of legal necessity in which a woman may be justified in taking another husband'.[119] Parāśara, who belongs to the same period, repeats this,[120] but says in the very next verse that a life of *brahmacarya* would be immensely preferable.

Vātsyāyana, who gives a matter-of-fact account of the society of his time, presents a beautiful and detailed account of the life of a remarried woman—her privileges and her limitations. There could be no regular marriage for a widow, but if she was too weak to restrain herself, she might join a man who was a seeker after pleasures (*bhogin*). In the selection of her second master, Vātsyāyana advises her to be guided by the natural inclinations of her own heart. The *punarbhū* in her new home enjoyed a degree of independence unknown to the wife wedded according to the sacramental rites. At her lover's house, she assumed the role of a mistress, patronized his wives, was generous to his servants, and treated his friends with familiarity, but was not permitted to participate in his religious observances. She cultivated a greater knowledge of the arts than his wedded wives. She took part in his sports and festivities, drinking parties, and so on. She might leave her lover (*nāyaka*), but if she was driven out, she did not give back anything. In the king's harem, where there were separate quarters for the various categories of women, the *punarbhū* occupied chambers midway between the queens, who were quartered in the innermost apartments, and the courtesans and actresses, in the outermost, and this exactly indicated the position occupied by the remarried woman in society. In the ordinary households also, the wedded wife, who participated with her husband in the religious rites, lived in comparative seclusion in the inner apartments, and never came out to receive his friends, nor joined his sports and parties. In Vātsyāyana's time, it appears, public opinion

[116] *Ibid.*, IX. 46.
[117] *Ibid.*, V. 151. Also cf. Manu, V. 156-8. 166; IX. 65-6.
[118] *Vasiṣṭha*, XVII. 19-20; *Manu*, IX. 60. 69-70. 175-6; *Viṣṇu*, XV. 7-9; *Yāj.*, I. 67.
[119] *Nārada*, Strīpuṁsa, St. 97. Cf. *Agni. P.*, 154. 5-6.
[120] *Parāśara*, IV. 30.

permitted the widow to live with the man of her choice, but she could never receive the same regard, nor acquire the same social status as the married wife.[121]

Even the man who took a widow to wife had to suffer from certain disabilities: Manu[122] prescribes that the husband of a re-married woman is to be excluded from *śrāddha* (memorial rites).

It appears that the re-marriage of a widow was in vogue in India from early times. It is known to Vasiṣṭha;[123] Kauṭilya, whose *Arthaśāstra* is certainly older than the extant *Manu Smṛti*, not only allows the widow to remarry but also the wife whose husband has not been heard of for a long time.[124] Vātsyāyana, who belonged to the same epoch as Nārada and Parāśara, makes it very clear that the position of the re-married widow approaches nearer to that of a mistress than that of a wedded wife. Widow-marriage was never looked upon with favour by Indo-Aryan society, and whatever vogue it may have had in early times, up to the early centuries of the Christian era, it gradually fell into disfavour, and still later writers on law prohibited it as a custom not to be observed in the later times—as a *kali-varjya-vidhi*. Mādhavācārya, the great commentator on Parāśara, in his comment on the above-quoted passage of Parāśara[125] quotes a text from the *Āditya Purāṇa* to show that 'the re-marriage of a married woman' was not to take place in the *kaliyuga*.[126]

CONCLUSION

The Vedic Indians made a supreme effort to understand the fundamental meaning and the purpose of life; they discovered that life was a continued pilgrimage to the infinite and the eternal, and they applied the truths discovered in the course of their philosophical investigations to the organization of society—made philosophy the essential basis of everyday life and activity. Success in reaching the ultimate goal lies, according to the Indian scheme of society, in each unit of the whole social organism attending to its own duty, as determined by its environments, its varying stages of life as well as sex. The very fact that this society, with spiritual freedom as its goal, has endured so long notwithstanding the terrible onsets of cultures basically different from its own, is a proof that there is truth in the principles underlying its structure—that it is broad-based upon the fundamental truths of human life. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that

[121] Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India: Studies in Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra* (Calcutta, 1929), pp. 181-4.

[122] III. 166.

[123] XVII. 19 20.

[124] *Kauṭ.*, III. 4.

[125] IV. 30.

[126] For a fuller treatment of the prohibitions in later times, see Batuknath Bhattacharya, *Kalivarjyas* (Calcutta, 1943).

this social organization is decadent, owing not so much to external opposition or any inherent weakness in the ideal, but to a falling off from the ideal itself. The decay set in when the spirit of the law through which the ideal found expression came to be lost sight of, and the letter of the law acquired an undue importance. The rules and ordinances, sanctions and prohibitions, governing popular life and activity came to be obeyed, without enquiry about the spirit, and sometimes in violation of it. The essence of religion was sacrificed to form and convention, to dead ritual and lifeless worship. The buried spirit has to be rediscovered, and the law framed anew, where needed, and obeyed with a consciousness of the spirit within.

There is need, however, to guard against false spirituality—against inactivity and sloth, passivity and feebleness, which not infrequently masquerade as spirituality. Genuine spiritual life must be intensely, and withal selflessly, active; it will manifest itself in purity, in clear vision, in cheerful and resolute devotion to a definite high purpose; it can never consist in a base retirement from active life, in passivity, dullness and stolidity. This sham spirituality dreads trouble and hankers after security; it is marked by ignoble ease and fear.

Added to this internal decay, there is an inrush of external forces that has thrown us off our feet. The aggressive civilization of the West, with a conception of life which is mainly materialistic and thus fundamentally different from ours, has caught us in its iron grip. Many of us have been blinded by the dazzling glare of its industrialism. They are beginning to think that our salvation lies through an importation of Western institutions, and are duped by the illusion of a so-called progress which is quite often nothing but a positive retrogression. They would even unthinkingly introduce in our midst institutions that the best thought in the West has found defective and even harmful. But nothing short of a catastrophe like this could rouse us from the stupor into which we had sunk. It has given us an awakening for which we cannot but be thankful. Contact with Western life for over a century has now made it amply clear that the modern European or American life has its bright and dark aspects, equally with the present-day Hindu life. At this juncture we require a searching analysis of both the civilizations, a critical appreciation of all that is great and good as also weak and defective in both the cultures. A comparative study of the two cultures by and for the Indians has become a vital necessity. Let us hope that this very struggle with an alien civilization will impart new life and vigour to us. Let this stimulus from without advance our growth, not retard it.

Our case is not so hopeless as might at first sight be supposed. The

impact of Islam on Indian culture brought forth Rāmānanda and Kabīr, Nānak and Caitanya. India accepted their interpretation of the purpose and meaning of life, adopted the course of discipline and conduct sketched out by them, and still follows their lead. And the race of these supermen is not extinct yet. That great souls like Sri Ramakrishna, out of their abounding love for suffering humanity, deign to come down and dwell amongst us, inspiring us with their lives and precepts, shows that there is still hope for us. They shape their course not from injunctions and ordinances, but from an intuitive perception of right and wrong, from a direct vision of truth ; it is they who can break the shell of form and convention that hides the great truths embedded in our sacred literature, and interpret them anew for us in words that we can understand and apply to our life ; it is they who can give us the true lead. Even thus is vindicated the promise conveyed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that the supreme Spirit incarnates Itself when the need arises.[127]

[127] *B.G.*, IV. 7.

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MONASTICISM IN INDIA

'THE INSTITUTION OF HOMELESSNESS'

MONASTIC orders and institutions are found in different ages, countries, and systems of religion, and in the religious and cultural history of India, monasticism has played a long and distinguished role. Its institutional types in India, dating back to various ages in their origin, are presented by *vihāras*, *āśramas*, *maṭhas*, *gurudvāras*, *ākhḍās*, etc. They belong to different creeds, sects, and religions, and differ widely in function and organization, as well as in size and status. But they all have the common characteristic of collective living for the sake of a higher spiritual life.

In the religious history of man, efforts for spiritual attainment have taken innumerable forms. One form, however, seems peculiar to Indian civilization: it is *sannyāsa*, leaving one's home, as well as kith and kin, and embracing 'homelessness'. In no other civilization, ancient or modern, has 'homelessness' a like significance or a similar institutional character. It is from the Greeks that we have the first eyewitness accounts, however scrappy and faulty, of Indian *sannyāsins*, but the institution of *sannyāsa* itself must have been a few centuries earlier.[1] Its origin is unknown, but we may infer that it was post-Vedic, from the complete absence of any allusion to it in the Vedic hymns.[2] In the sixth century B.C., if the earliest scriptures of Buddhism and Jainism reflect, as scholars like Rhys Davids and others hold, the traditions of life and society in eastern India of that age, the institution not only existed, but flourished. Seekers after spiritual attainment would pass 'from home into homelessness' (*agārasmā anagāriyam*—a standing phrase in the Buddhist Pali scriptures to describe this condition), and the Buddha himself was one of them. It seems that in that century the adherents of the institution, the homeless men of religion, formed a populous community in the north-eastern parts of the country. They were known as *parivrājakas* (wanderers; *paribbājakas* in Pali), which was a general name, while special designations also were given to members of the community, hitting off some aspect or other of a *parivrājaka's* condition of life—*sannyāsin* (one who has *cast off* home and worldly life), *śramaṇa* (a *toiler* for spiritual life), *bhikṣu* (a mendicant *living on alms*;

[1] See McCrindle's *Ancient India: Its Invasion by Alexander the Great*, *passim*.

[2] In the Vedic hymns, two classes of homeless, wandering men are referred to, viz. *muni* and *vrātya*, in *R.V.*, X. 126 and *A.V.*, XV, respectively. I have given my reasons for differentiating them from the *sannyāsin* in *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 52-59.

bhikkhu in Pali), etc. No credal or other distinctions in the community were originally implied by these denominations.[3]

In later developments of Indian religion, when differences of creeds and systems became more clearly defined the 'wanderers' of each religion had their own body of practices, rules, and regulations, disciplinary and organizational The various names denoting the condition of the religious 'homelessness' were appropriated by different religious systems: *bhikkhu* and *samana* by the Buddhists, *yati* (less commonly, *samana*) by the Jains, and *sannyāsin* by the followers of Brāhmaṇism. The institution had its regulations in each system. In Buddhism, these regulations are known technically as *vinaya* (conduct) and occupy a whole division (called *piṭaka*, meaning basket) of its scriptural collection. In Brāhmaṇism, they are inserted *passim* in Sūtra (aphoristic) works, but an ancient body of regulations meant specially for the 'wanderers' seems to have existed, though it is no longer extant.[4] In Jainism, however, no specific rules and regulations seem to have been devised, except the rules of the observance of the *pajjusana* (staying somewhere during the rainy season).

The institution of *sannyāsa*, however, went against the grain of the socio-religious culture which the Aryan founders of Indian civilization had sought to develop and stabilize. In both Pali and Sanskrit literature, there are clear indications that the system which western scholars have called Brāhmaṇism was at odds with the institution of 'homelessness', termed Śramaṇism.[5] But the latter seems to have enjoyed great popular esteem, and the Brāhmaṇical sages who elaborated later the theory of life in four stages (*āśramas*) admitted 'homelessness' as the fourth or last condition of life, but their preference was always for the condition of the householder, which was the second stage.[6]

ORIGIN OF COENOBIUM

The development of coenobium (collective life under rules of discipline for the purpose of spiritual self-culture and self-realization) from the homeless, wandering, unsettled life of the primitive *religieux* was determined by a peculiarity of the Indian climate. India is the land of monsoon rains. There are two monsoon periods in India—an earlier and longer period at the end of summer, and a later and shorter one in winter, confined to the north-western parts. These periodic rains have been a feature of the

[3] For example, the *Bṛ.-U.* mentions Śramaṇa in contradistinction to Brāhmaṇa in IV. 3. 22: Medhātithi in his commentary on *Manu*, VI. 25 refers to *Śramaṇaka-Sūtra* as an authority on the practices of a religious mendicant. Pāṇini refers to a *Bhikṣu-Sūtra* by Parāśara in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, II. 1. 70.

[4] This was perhaps the *Bhikṣu-Sūtra* by Parāśara referred to by Pāṇini. See f.n. 3.

[5] I have dealt with this point at large in *Early Buddhist Monachism*, on pp. 60-74.

[6] The relevant passages are collected with translations in *ibid.*, pp. 71-74.

Indian climate from primitive times. There is a Vedic hymn which describes with picturesque effect the violence of these rains—how they 'congregate in the sky and oppress the earth with the fury of their torrents'.[7] The meteorological factor had to be reckoned with, and it appears that it was a custom of the primitive wandering community to suspend wandering and take up residence until the skies cleared, making movements easy again. An ancient custom is apt to assume in course of time a sanctity and ceremonial character. It was so with the above custom of seeking shelter during the rainy season. The wanderers of all religious persuasions observed the 'rainy season residence' ceremonially. The Sanskrit scriptures prescribe it for the *sannyāsins*; the Buddhists call it *vassa* and the Jains *pajjusana*.[8]

The manner in which this period of a wanderer's yearly round, from three to four months, was to be spent is prescribed in Buddhism with much elaboration. With regard to the Hindu *sannyāsins* and the Jain *yatis*, it is not so clear. But it may be assumed that living in company was the rule. In India, it was the Buddhist monks, styling themselves *bhikkhus* and differentiating themselves from the 'wanderers',[9] who developed coenobium to such an extent that settled life throughout the year at a monastery became the rule of religious life among them, and wandering life became the exception.

BUDDHIST AVASAS AND VIHARAS

It was the life of a perfect religious wanderer that the founder of Buddhism inculcated upon his followers who had gone 'from home into homelessness'. 'Let not two of you come along the same way'[10] is an injunction of his. Free, wandering life was perhaps the original ideal of the followers of the Buddha; it is emphasized in a number of Buddhist scriptures, and seems to have been traditionally retained as an ideal to be kept in view even when Buddhist monastic life and its regulations had been completely developed.[11] Originally a Buddhist *vihāra* did not mean

[7] *A.V.*, IV. 15.

[8] For the *sannyāsins*, see *Aruṇeya Upaniṣad*, IV; *Gaut. Dh. S.*, III. 13; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, II. 6. 11. 20. For the Jain *yatis* or *samanas*, see Jacobi's *Jaina Sutras* (S.B.E.), pt. i, p. 296. For the Buddhists, see section on *vassa* in (Pali) *Vinaya Piṭaka*. (The *Aruṇeya* text for *sannyāsins* is: *varṣāsu dhruvaśīlōṣṭau mā śāsanekākī yatiścared dvāveva vā*).

[9] For example, see *Pācittiya* (41) in the *Pātimokkha*, where it is made an offence for a *bhikkhu* to deliver with his own hand food or drink to a naked ascetic or a *paribbājaka*. Also *Cullavagga*, V. 23. 2 (in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*) where *bhikkhus* and *paribbājakas* are distinguished ('They are not *bhikkhus*, but *paribbājakas*').

[10] *Mahāvagga*, I. 11 (*mā ekena dve agamittha*).

[11] In the *Suttanipāta*, the *Theragāthā* and the *Dhammapada*, the unsocial eremitical life is recommended. How to reconcile this ideal with the practice of monastic life is one of the 'two-edged questions' (*ubhayakoṭika pañha*) put by King Milinda to Nāgasena (41st Dilemma). See Treckner's *Milindapanho*, p. 211.

a congregational monastery, but a shelter for an individual *bhikkhu* from the inclemencies of the weather. The legend that describes the origin of *vihāras* speaks of a merchant of Rājagṛha building sixty *vihāras* in a day for the *bhikkhus*, and the Lord blessing the donor for providing those shelters for them from rough wind and weather.[12] They must have been mere cottages and convenient lodging places for individual eremites: the idea of coenobium had not yet developed.

At a certain stage, probably in the fourth century B.C., the Buddhists thought of the observance of the *vassa* in company and of betaking themselves, for at least three months in the year, to congregational life and activities.

So they started staking out *āvāsas* (colonies) where, during rains, the *bhikkhus* could find what was termed 'bed and sitting accommodation' (*senāsana*).[13] An *āvāsa* was circumscribed by metes and bounds, so that the residents therein during the period of the rain retreat formed a unitary communion.

The rules for the staking out of an *āvāsa* lay down that its limits must coincide with natural boundaries, such as a mountain, a hill, a river, a wood, etc., but they must not exceed three *yojanas* nor extend to the opposite side of a river, unless there were facilities for crossing. Within the boundaries thus settled, those who were allotted 'bed and sitting accommodation' would form a communion, of which a tangible token and ceremonial expression was found in the holding of a fortnightly congregational service called *uposatha*. There were rules of admission to and exclusion from the *uposatha* service, calculated to safeguard the unitary organization of each *āvāsa*. The residents constituted what was called a *saṅgha* (brotherhood).

Within the boundaries of the *āvāsa*, the lodging houses were called *vihāras*, and they developed in course of time, perhaps in a couple of centuries, from the single eremitical to the larger congregational type, from *vihāras* into monasteries. This development can be traced from the archaeological remains, of successive ages, of ancient Buddhist *vihāras* all over India. 'The oldest Vihāras', says Fergusson,[14] 'consist of one cell only; little hermitages in fact for the residence of a single ascetic. In the next class they were extended to a long verandah with one cell behind it . . . As these had, however, several doors opening outwards, they probably were divided by partitions internally. In the third class, and by far the most numerous class . . . The cell expands into a hall, generally with pillars in

[12] *Cullavagga*, VI. 1. 5.

[13] For detailed treatment, see *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 125-36 and Chapter VII ('Communal Life at an Āvāsa').

[14] *The Rock-cut Temples of India* (1864), Introd., pp. xv-vi.

the centre; and around this the cells of the monks are arranged.' The archaeological evidence is supported by the developments in meaning and connotation of the term *vihāra* in Pali.[15] In the picture of monastic life presented by the Pali Buddhist scriptures, which date back in their contents, in the opinion of competent authorities, to the fourth century B.C., we find descriptions of these monastic colonies (*āvāsas*) with residential quarters (*vihāras*) scattered within their boundaries. In after ages, however, the *āvāsa* became obsolete; it was replaced by a single large and many-mansioned edifice of brick or stone, called *saṅghārāma* (house for the Saṅgha), with adjuncts and outhouses, and this was the type the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hian saw at many places in northern India at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.

MONASTIC LIFE AND ORGANIZATION IN ANCIENT BUDDHISM

The life and organization of an ancient Buddhist Saṅgha, i.e. a company of monks settled at an *āvāsa*, ostensibly at first for the rain retreat, but for permanent domicile afterwards, had some outstanding and distinguishing features. It had been the custom among the primitive religious wanderers for each sect to be organized under a head who was called the Master (*satthā*). A convert to the sect would embrace the Master's faith (*dhamma*), and place himself under his guidance and regiment.[16] But the sect founded by the Buddha developed after his decease a different organization, which, on the evidence of some Buddhist legends, seems to have been looked upon by the contemporaries of other sects as somewhat strange and peculiar.[17] The headship was abolished; all members of a Saṅgha were on a footing of equality, and the principle of obedience to a Master was watered down to respect and reverence for instructors and elders, and politeness to, and consideration for, equals. For the discharge of the functions of its collective life, the whole body of monks constituted a perfectly democratic community at an *āvāsa*.[18]

It has been suggested[19] that this peculiar organization of a Buddhist Saṅgha—the absence of headship, the recognition of equality of all members, and collective modes of ecclesiastical action based on voting—was perhaps prescribed by the founder himself, who had lived till his twenty-ninth year in close touch with the traditions of the republican States. The religious

[15] See examples given by Childers under *Pariveṇam* in his *Dictionary of the Pali Language*.

[16] In the Buddhist legends are instances of one religious wanderer accosting another with the questions: Who, friend, is your Master (*satthā*)? Whose Faith (*dhamma*) do you prefer? To whom is thy discipleship directed (*uddesa*)? See *Mahāvagga*, I. 6. 7, and I. 23.

[17] See *Gopāla-Moggallāna-Sutta in Majjhima Nikāya* where Vassākara asks Ānanda how, in the absence of a *satthā*, unity can be maintained in the Order (*Further Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. II).

[18] See *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 143-46.

[19] K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (2nd Ed., 1943), p. 44.

Saṅgha of the Buddhists, it is suggested, copied 'the political *saṅgha*' with which the founder had been familiar in his youth.

The Saṅgha could act only as a corporate body. All its functions, from the settling of the boundaries of an *āvāsa* to the enforcement of discipline on a delinquent monk, were discharged in the name and form of *saṅgha-kammas* (transactions or acts of the Saṅgha). The *Vinaya* section of the early Buddhist scriptures contains elaborate and sometimes complicated rules governing a *saṅghakamma*. Ecclesiastical acts are classified, and the rules pertaining to each are meticulously laid down. The form, however, is common. In all cases, an assembly of the whole congregation present at the *āvāsa* is called; a Resolution (called *natti*, meaning announcement) is put, which is then formally declared to the assembly—a procedure technically called Declaration (*anussāvanā*); if the assembly does not signify by the token of silence its unanimous consent, ballots (called *salākā*, meaning voting 'sticks') are cast by all the members present, and the majority opinion, which is to prevail, is ascertained by counting them.[20]

It appears that a Saṅgha of Buddhist monks, *vis a vis* the State in ancient India, had the legal status of a body corporate—its rules and regulations being recognized and given effect to by the State as 'conventional law' (called *samaya* in Sanskrit jurisprudence).[21] We find Emperor Aśoka, in his concern to prevent dissensions in the Saṅgha, declaring in some of his edicts[22] his intention to enforce the penal provision in the Buddhist *Vinaya* relating to the expulsion of schismatics.

The principal religious ceremony at an *āvāsa* was the holding of the fortnightly service of *uposatha*. The custom had its origin in the Vedic sacrifices called *darśa* and *pūrṇamāsa*, performed on days of the new moon and the full moon respectively, and the observance of these two dates as holy seems to have been taken up by the wandering religious communities of post-Vedic Age, though in their case rituals were substituted by religious discourses selected by each sect for itself. At a certain stage the Buddhists appropriated the occasion to the recital of the *Pātimokkha*, a fundamental code comprising a classified list of ecclesiastical offences, and the penalties therefor. The original code, it seems, was enlarged and improved upon and finally re-edited for the ceremonial service. It was ostensibly intended to be a confessional service,[23] but assumed later on a purely ceremonial character, since anyone guilty of any of the listed offences had to obtain

[20] The procedure of a *saṅghakamma* is expounded in *Early Buddhist Monachism* (Ch VI., 'Internal Polity of a Buddhist Saṅgha').
[21] *Nārada*, X. 1-2; *Manu*, VIII. 219 and Medhātithi's comment thereon in which 'the *saṅgha* of the *bhikṣus*' is mentioned.
[22] Sārnāth Pillar Edict and other edicts.
[23] *Mahāvagga*, II. 1.

'purification' (*parisuddhi*) before being allowed to join in the service. It became only a collective, symbolical expression of the communion of the monks, much like the Christian Holy Communion.

There were two other ceremonies, which were rather of a quasi-religious character—*pavāranā* and *kaṭhina*. They marked the close of the rain retreat (*vassa*). The *pavāranā* was a solemn conference, at which each monk in turn requested the assembly to call him to account if they had seen or heard or suspected him to be guilty of any transgression during the period of the rain retreat. If proved guilty, a monk had to make due amends by undertaking the prescribed penalty ; meanwhile, he suffered exclusion from the assembly. The *kaṭhina* was the ceremony of the distribution of robes out of the general store. It was conducted by an officer duly appointed by the Saṅgha in the *saṅghakamma* form.

All property belonged to the Saṅgha, and individual right to property was not recognized.

BUDDHIST MONASTIC CULTURE

Early Buddhism, not being a religion of rites and ceremonies, left a large scope for, and laid great stress upon, cultural development for every monk. There was a system of tutorship in each *āvāsa*.[24] There was also complete freedom of thought. In matters of doctrine no authority, personal or academic, was recognized, and the insistence always was on perfect comprehension and honesty of thought and belief. Differences of opinion might lead to schisms in Saṅgha, but schisms, based on honest differences, were allowed[25]—to such an extent indeed that sects began to proliferate even at a very early stage in Buddhist history. The very atmosphere of an *āvāsa* was surcharged with the spirit of questioning, scrutinizing, and debating ; this in effect bestowed on the members' intellectual curiosity and abilities, and they attained an extraordinarily high premium in a monastic community. An engrossing activity of the Saṅgha even from the beginning was the holding of learned debates on the doctrines (*Ahbidhammakathā*).[26] starting thus with a strong bias for intellectual culture, Buddhist monasteries in their later development evolved a pronounced academic character. The

[24] It was usual for a newly admitted monk to live at the monastery in tutelage (called *nissaya*) with a senior of at least ten years' standing, who was called in this relation *upajjhāya ācārya*. The usual period was ten years. The very word *brahmaccariya* (meaning 'the learner's stage of life' in Brāhmaṇical scriptures) is used to describe the condition of a *bhikkhu* who lives in *nissaya* (*Mahāvagga*, I. 32. 1.).

[25] See *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 191-96.

[26] An *Abhidhammakathā* (Debate on the Doctrine) between two Bhikkhus is described in the *Mahā-gosiṅga-Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya*, Ed. Pali Text Society, I. p. 214) in which the *bhikkhus* are said to 'put questions to one another, furnishing answers and not collapsing, but gaining edification by their discussion'. These discussions perhaps provided the main contents of the *Abhidhamma* text-books in the Pali canon.

scope of monastic culture and learning expanded from age to age. Purely canonical and exegetic at the beginning, they drew into their purview in later times the results of the philosophical speculations of other systems of thought and religion as well. The continual interpenetration of Brāhmaṇical and Buddhistic elements, so marked a feature of India's later cultural history, is perhaps due in a large measure to the extreme catholicity and receptiveness of the Buddhist monastic culture of later ages.

BUDDHIST MONASTIC UNIVERSITIES

The earlier Pali and the later Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures abound in references to particular monasteries of great contemporary fame and sanctity as well as of ancient foundations (e.g. Jetavana, Aśokārāma, Kāñcī, etc.). But the history of none of them is traceable beyond occasional references. It is only at a late stage in the development of Buddhist monachism that some light on the functional side of the monasteries is received from the Chinese pilgrims. Two Chinese 'records', viz. Yuan Chwang's *Si-Yu-Ki* ('Western-countries Record') and I-tsing's *Nan-hai-chi-kuei-nai-fa-chuan* ('Record of Buddhism written and sent back from the South Seas'), containing accounts of their authors' experiences in India during A.D. 629-45 and A.D. 671-95 respectively, are of especial importance in this context. We gather from these records that in eastern India, a few monasteries, called *mahāvihāras* ('Great Monasteries') for the sake of their distinction, developed under the patronage of the enlightened Gupta emperors (*c.* A.D. 320-500), primarily into the universities, which were resorted to by teachers and learners and were organized on a more or less large scale as seats of learning. In the practices and observances of communal life, their monastic character was maintained, as also the traditional religious and monkish atmosphere. But their *raison d'etre* was decidedly cultural rather than religious. Fully equipped with the usual educational paraphernalia—professors and students, graded courses and syllabi, academic regulations, lecture halls, libraries, and even a system of examinations—they were practically universities in their organization.

Such monastic establishments having the character of a university, varying of course in size and reputation, were flourishing in Magadha and elsewhere in the east of India when the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang was in this country. The largest and foremost among them was the *mahāvihāra* at Nālandā, of which we have accounts at first hand from both Yuan Chwang and I-tsing. They agree in extolling this *mahāvihāra*, with its thousands of residents, as the most famous place of learning, the most eminent seat of scholarship and culture in the West, organized as a university as distinct from an ordinary monastic establishment. As pilgrims and seekers after

knowledge came to Nālandā from the Far East, so did young scholars, intrepid in their eagerness to learn, from the bleak trans-Himalayan north. When Yuan Chwang was residing at Nālandā in A.D. 637-38, there was also a less known Tibetan scholar prosecuting his studies there. He was Thoumi Sambhota, an officer under the contemporary king of Tibet. After completing his Indian studies, this Tibetan scholar went back to his own country and expounded to the king the religion of the Buddha as he had learnt it at Nālandā. The king, whose name was Sroṅ-Tsaṅ-gam-po, and who had a Chinese Buddhist wife, was so impressed and convinced that he at once proclaimed it as the State religion of Tibet. This was at the end of the thirties of the seventh century.[27]

It seems that at least for a couple of centuries after the time of Yuan Chwang and Thoumi Sambhota, the University of Nālandā continued to function. Several manuscripts, going back to these later centuries, have been discovered in Nepal and Tibet, in which the scribe states in the colophon that the copy was made at Nālandā.[28] Long after the Chinese records, a descriptive account of Nālandā and its three vast libraries occurs in a Tibetan historio-graphical work of the seventeenth century, and it also preserves a tradition that this age-old university ended in a conflagration started by a Turuṣka ('Turk', probably meaning a Mohammedan).[29]

During the declining years of Nālandā, after its heyday in the middle of the seventh century, two other universities came to the fore—Odantapura and Vikramaśīla, the former being the older.[30] Odantapura was located somewhere on the border between Bihar and Bengal, and it was here that the illustrious Indian missionary of Buddhism in Tibet, Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, deified by the Tibetans as Atīśa, received his education. Dīpaṅkara, after completing his training at Odantapura, passed on to Vikramaśīla where he was posted as the head of the establishment (*ācārya*) during 1034-48, after which he left the university for Tibet. The site of Vikramaśīla has not been definitely identified yet. It is described in the Tibetan records as the most famous place of learning in the East, situated on a 'bluff hill' on the right bank of the Gaṅgā 'where the Holy River flows

[27] The story of Thoumi Sambhota from Tibetan sources is given in S. C. Das's *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow*, published in 1893 and now extremely rare.

[28] The works and the colophons are referred to *passim* in Rajendra Lal Mitra's *Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal* (1882) and S. C. Vidyabhusan's *Mediaeval School of Indian Logic* (1909).

[29] Sumpa's *Pag-sam-jon-zang* ('History of the rise, progress and downfall of Buddhism in India'), edited in two volumes in 1908 by S. C. Das with a list of contents and an analytical index in English. The final extinction of Nālandā was probably synchronous with the Mohammedan invasion of Bihar. Tāranātha, whose history of Buddhism in Tibetan is earlier than Sumpa's and was completed in 1608, says that when Bihar was sacked by the Mohammedans, the Buddhist teachers fled to other regions (see Schiefner's German translation of Tāranātha, Ch. 37).

[30] In S. C. Vidyabhusan's *Mediaeval School of Indian Logic*, there are two appendices on these two universities, in which Tibetan sources of information are drawn upon.

northwards'. The university, which was in its most flourishing state under the Buddhist Pāla kings of Bengal, was a stately establishment with six noble gates, each guarded by a university officer, called the Guardian Scholar of the Gate (*Dvāra-paṇḍita*). The degree of *Paṇḍita* (equivalent to 'Master of Arts') used to be granted by this university. Its fame in Tibetan records is due in a large measure perhaps to its association with Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna (A.D. 980-1053), who was most probably a Bengalee.[31]

MONASTICISM IN OTHER RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

It is in the Buddhist religion that monasticism flourished most. Buddhist scriptural records define its typical features, its laws and regulations, and its corporate organization, and historical records (Chinese and Tibetan) afford a passing view of some of its most important centres in India from the fifth century A.D. The monastic system was so well-developed in Buddhism and its laws and regulations, called *Vinaya,* were so elaborate as to occupy a whole division of the Buddhist canon that western scholars have sometimes misconceived Buddhism as a religion for monkhood. It is out of the institution of homelessness, as we have seen, that coenobium evolved ; and collective living during a part of the year was a fixed custom in the wandering religious community, irrespective of credal and sectarian difference. But it was the Buddhists who evolved out of the ancient custom a complete and well-organized system of coenobitical life. In Jainism, there is nothing corresponding to the Buddhist *Vinaya* rules, although the homeless *yatis* who adhered to the faith of Mahāvīra observed as well as the *bhikkhus* the customary rain retreat. The Sanskrit texts which bear on the regulations of the life of a Brāhmaṇical *sannyāsin* prescribe only living at a fixed place during the rains without indicating whether singly or in company.[32] The surmise is perhaps not a haphazard one that Buddhist *vihāras,* being the most ancient in origin and growth, afforded to other religious systems and sects the exemplar of corporate living of monks under discipline. The

[31] There is a contemporary Life of Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, written by Nag-tcho, a learned Tibetan monk, who was sent by the Tibetan king to meet Dīpaṅkara at Vikramaśīla and escort him to Tibet. Nag-tcho became Dīpaṅkara's most prominent disciple. The work is extant in Tibetan, but has not been edited. An abridged English version is given in S. C. Das's *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow.* Nag-tcho records that, after his first taste of Tibetan tea, Dīpaṅkara uttered some words of appreciation which are set down as· *'bhalo, bhālo, ati bhālo'*. These are Bengali words meaning, 'Good, good, very good'. Dīpaṅkara lived for thirteen years in Tibet and died at the age of seventy-two at Nethan in the Tibetan interior, where he was cremated. A handful of his ashes and charred bones was deposited there in a tomb, known locally as Sgro-ma. It was visited by Captain Waddell and is described in his book, *Lhasha and its Mysteries* (1905). Dīpaṅkara (under the Tibetan name, Atīśa) is now among the Tibetan gods, and an image of him, among those of other gods, may be seen in the Tibetan monastery (*gumbha*) at Ghoom near Darjeeling

[32] In the *Āruṇeya* text, quoted in footnote 8, the words mean 'one or two'. In his comment on the rule of Gautama, *Dhruvaśilo varṣāsu,* Haradatta interprets the first word as *ekatra,* which may mean 'at one place' or 'together', preferably the former.

institution is now well established in Hinduism under the name of *āśrama*.

The term *āśrama* has undergone a development in meaning. Originally it meant a stage of life, and then, a hermitage to which a person in the third stage of life called *vānaprastha* used to resort. The hermitage was just a convenient shelter for a sage living aloof from the world, but, with family or a group of disciples. An *āśrama* in its current modern sense, however, is a different kind of establishment—a monastery where Hindu monks live together in a more or less organized and corporate society.

HINDU ĀŚRAMAS

Compared with the antiquity of Buddhist monasticism, the monastic institutions of Hindu religion and culture may be said to be modern. Their origin is probably contemporaneous with the Vedāntic Renaissance in Hinduism, led by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya I. Though there is still a good deal of chronological obscurity over the actual historical beginnings of the Hindu Neo-Vedāntic movement, some of its main trends seem to indicate that it must have arisen when Buddhism was in its decline as a religion, but was yet active as an influence on forms of thought and cultural institutions. Perhaps this occurred in the early part of the ninth century A.D.

The central doctrine of Neo-Vedāntism, viz. *māyā* (illusoriness of phenomena), was assailed by its late sixteenth century critic Vijñāna Bhikṣu as a surreptitious borrowing from Buddhism.[33] Buddhism perhaps lent to the Neo-Vedāntic movement the example of its monastic orders and institutions also. The legend is that the founder of Neo-Vedāntism, Śaṅkarācārya, whose life, however, remains mostly a bundle of historically unverifiable legends, founded four *maṭhas* or monastic establishments at four extreme corners of India—Joṣī Maṭha in the Himalayas, Śṛṅgerī Maṭha in Mysore, Śāradā Maṭha in Gujarat, and Govardhana Maṭha in Orissa. These *maṭhas*, dotting India's extreme north, south, west, and east, are functioning still, but how far back each *maṭha* goes in time, and whether they were all contemporaneous in origin, has not yet been investigated. But the particular legend decidedly points to the idea, which probably inhered in the Vedāntic Renaissance movement of early ninth century, of covering the whole of the Indian sub-continent with a network of Hindu monasteries, as it

[33] In his commentary, called *Sāṁkhya-pravacana-bhāṣya*, on the *Vedānta-Sūtra*, Vijñāna Bhikṣu says (I. 22): 'Where the modern so-called Vedāntins show indications of Māyāvāda, there, however, the traditional saying of God Śiva in the *Padma Purāṇa* beginning, "Māyāvāda is unorthodox tenet and is also Buddhist in disguise; O Goddess, so I myself have said to pretending Brāhmaṇas in the *kali* Age", is applicable owing to its affinity to the doctrine of the (Buddhist) Vijñānavādins' (*yat tu vedāntibruvāṇām ādhunikasya māyāvādasyātra liṅgaṁ dṛśyate tat teṣāṁ api vijñānavādyekadeśītayā yuktameva. 'Māyāvādamasacchāstraṁ pracchannaṁ Bauddhameva cha; Mayaiva kathitaṁ devi kalau Brāhmaṇarupiṇe'. Ityādi Padmapurāṇastha-Śiva-vākya-paramparābhyaḥ*). (See Garbe's edition in HOS, p. 16).

had been in the past covered with Buddhist monasteries. Hinduism, in the first flush of its latest renaissance, sought to take the wind out of the sails of Buddhism by renovating and reaffiliating not only its philosophy but also its typical cultural institution.

When India passed under Mohammedan rule, these centres of Hindu monasticism survived silently and kept up the monastic tradition, which the followers of Kabīr and Nānak in the fourteenth century followed, and which obtained a footing in the *gurudvāras* of Sikhism.

The revival of the *āśrama* institution in modern India is mainly the achievement of the Ramakrishna Mission. It is, however, more a renovation than a revival, for the Mission has given to the ancient monasticism of India a modern reorientation—a turn towards a new purpose, a new outlook, and, in its humanitarian emphasis, a new relation to the welfare of humanity at large.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA

WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

THIS survey of the position of women in ancient India may be begun with some account of their education. Girls in their early age were given lessons in dancing and singing. Princess Rājyaśrī, daughter of Rājyavardhana, king of Thaneswar, grew up in the company of friends expert in song and dance. Girls received their education at home with the help of teachers engaged by their parents. The result was that the women belonging to the poorer classes, who could not afford to engage a teacher, were deprived of the benefit of education. As Asahāya, commentator of the *Nārada Smṛti*, who flourished in the eighth century A.D. remarks, owing to the absence of education the intelligence in women was not as well developed as in men. Women, particularly of the middle and upper classes, could read and write. Nārada makes mention of the love letters exchanged between men and women. The *Pavanadūta* and many other literary works of the period also refer to them.

In A.D. 1058 a lady named Māmakā, wife of Dhaneśvara, professing the Mahāyāna system of Buddhism, 'caused a copy of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* to be written in the Saddharma-cakra-pravartana Mahāvihāra at Sārnāth. Ketaladevī, queen of the Cālukya Vikramāditya VI (A.D. 1076-1126) of the Deccan, was called Abhinava Sarasvatī for her literary achievement. Śīlabhaṭṭārikā composed poems in the Pāñcālī style in which there is a graceful harmony of sense and sound. The Poetess Vijayāṅkā of Karṇāṭa was considered equal to Sarasvatī, and again as second only to Kālidāsa. The poems of Devī, a poetess of Lāṭa (southern Gujarat), are said to have soothed the heart of the people long after her death. Avantīsundarī, wife of the well-known poet Rājaśekhara, was a literary critic and earned also reputation as a poetess. Bālapaṇḍitā, daughter of the Poet Dhanapāla, was a poetess of great merit. About this time a poetess named Sītā lived in the court of the Paramāra Bhoja. She composed songs eulogizing the achievements of Upendra, the founder of the Paramāra dynasty. Other poetesses of this age included Bhāvadevī, Rajakasarasvatī, Sarasvatī, Vikaṭanitamvā, Phalguhastinī, Mārulā, Morikā, and Vijjakā, whose poems have been quoted in the anthologies. A lady named Rūśā wrote a medical book on the diseases of women, which was translated into Arabic in the eighth century. Tradition relates that Maṇḍana Miśra's wife Ubhayabhāratī

(Śāradā or Sarasavāṇī) served as an umpire when there was a religious debate between her husband and Śaṅkarācārya.

MARRIAGE

The Dharma-śāstra writers of the period, viz. Nārada and Bṛhaspati, enjoin that girls must be given in marriage as soon as the signs of maturity become apparent. The marriageable age of a girl as given by Dakṣa, Aṅgiras, Yama, and Parāśara varies from eight to twelve. The father of a girl who fails to observe it is deemed to have committed a great sin. Bāṇa relates that King Prabhākaravardhana of Thaneswar became anxious for the marriage of his daughter when she was nearing maturity. Al Biruni (A.D. 1030) remarks that the Brāhmaṇas in India married girls twelve years old. Evidence, however, is not lacking about the marriage of girls at a fairly advanced age. Mṛṇālavatī, the sister of Taila II (A.D. 997), king of the Deccan, remained unmarried even when she was mature in age. In royal families girls were sometimes given chances to select their husbands in an assembly of kings (*svayaṁvara-sabhā*). The Cāhamāna Mahendra, king of Naḍula, in Marwar, organized a *svayaṁvara-sabhā* for the marriage of his daughter. The Cālukya Vikramāditya VI of the Deccan was selected as her husband by the Śilāhāra princess Candralekhā in such a *sabhā*. Ordinarily, the selection of the bridegroom was made by the girl's father, or by her brother with the father's authority, or by the paternal grandfather, maternal uncle, agnates, or cognates. In the absence of all of them the mother gave her in marriage. A girl having no such relatives could according to Nārada, select a bridegroom of her own choice with the consent of the king.

CONDUCT OF WOMEN

Married women used vermilion. Women also used turmeric, saffron, *kajjala* (lamp black for the eye), betel, auspicious ornaments, and articles for keeping the hair in order. The practice of using veils by women, particularly in well-to-do families, was in vogue. Prabhākaravardhana's daughter Rājyaśrī put on a veil when she met her husband, the Maukhari Grahavarman of Kanauj, for the first time. In the *Kādambarī* Patralekhā is described as wearing a veil of red cloth. It is known from Vācaspati Miśra (ninth century A.D.) that women in good families observed the *purdah* system and did not appear in public without veils. This was, however, not the general custom. Dhoyī, the author of the twelfth century poetical work called the *Pavanadūta*, relates that the women of Vijayapura (in Bengal) did not observe the *purdah* system. Harṣavardhana's mother Yaśomatī is found giving instructions to the ministers of the State before

her death. The Arab geographer Abu Zaid (ninth century) reports that 'most princes in India allow their women to be seen when they hold their court. No veil conceals them from the eyes of the visitors'.

The contemporary law-books and the Purāṇas give us pictures of the ideal wife. She was the mainstay of the domestic life, and was a source of happiness. Troubles and calamities were averted by her. She took care of the family deity and entertained the guests. She rose before the others, paid reverence to the elders of the family, and prepared food and condiments. She worked hard like a slave, offered food like a mother, and gave advice like a counsellor in adversity. She was absolutely devoted to her husband. She reverenced him more than Śiva and Viṣṇu. She served the Lord by serving him. She took her meal after her husband. She did not utter his name, since this action was believed to shorten his longevity. When the husband went abroad, the wife removed her ornaments from her body. She avoided decorating herself, partaking of sumptuous food and drink, as well as dancing, singing, and witnessing public festivals or spectacles. When the husband came into the house, she washed his feet, offered him a seat and betel, fanned him, and wiped off his perspiration. She did not mix with women who were hostile to her husband, nor did she join the *samāja* (public festival). It is stated that as the body is purified by an ablution in the Gaṅgā, so a house is purified by the existence of a *pativratā* (chaste wife). Wives were to be protected by their husbands from evil. The husbands were advised to achieve this end by being devoted to them and not by beating and tyrannizing over them. Women would participate in the religious activities of their husbands, but they could not take to religious fast, perform *vrata* (a particular form of religious rite), or go on pilgrimage without the consent of their husbands. Vilāsadevī, queen of Vijayasena (1095-1158) of Bengal, performed in the palace of Vikramapura a *homa* (offering in the fire) in which gold equivalent to a person's weight was given away. The queen is not known to have performed this ceremony with the express permission of her husband. Sometimes wives even subscribed to creeds different from those of their husbands. The Gāhaḍavāla Govindacandra (A.D. 1114-1156) of Kanauj had a number of queens, of whom two were Buddhists. The Pāla king Madanapāla (*c.* A.D. 1150), who was a Buddhist, granted land to the Brāhmaṇa Vaṭeśvara Svāmin as his fee for reading out the *Mahābhārata* before his queen Citramatikādevī. Mācikābbe, the wife of the Gaṅga Mārasiṁha, who was a Śaiva, adopted asceticism and, meditating on the Jaina, attained salvation by fasting. The Cālukya Jayasiṁha II Jagadekamalla (A.D. 1015-1043), who was a Jain, is said to have been converted to the Śaiva faith by his queen Suggaladevī. Women do not seem to have

suffered any religious disabilities. The Princess Pambabbe, sister of the Western Gaṅga Butuga II (A.D. 971), devoted her life to practising penance for thirty years. Many women entered the Buddhist church as nuns.

LEGAL PROTECTION

As regards the general treatment of women, Bṛhaspati says that a woman must be watched day and night by her mother-in-law and other women of the family. The same authority lays down that if a man violates an unwilling woman, his property is to be confiscated, and he shall be paraded on an ass. The Smṛti writers of this period do not advocate the abandoning of the wife by the husband for adultery, but on the contrary allow her to regain all her normal rights after performance of the appropriate penance. The woman was to be abandoned only if she had conceived as the result of the adultery. Some later writers were more liberal in this matter. In their opinion the woman, even when she had conceived by adultery, did not become an outcast. She was considered impure till delivery; the illegitimate child born was handed over to someone else for rearing. Some Smṛtis and Purāṇas of this period condemn women for their moral lapses. But other authorities give us a different picture of the moral life of women. Women in general, says Varāhamihira (*c.* A.D. 500), are pure and blameless; they deserve the highest honour and respect. The same author castigates some writers for dilating only on the vices of women instead of their virtues. This picture of the character of women is reflected in the works of Kālidāsa, Bāna, Bhavabhūti, and other classical writers of the age.

SUTTEEISM AND AUSTERITIES

The Smṛti writers of this period lay down that a woman after the death of her husband may become a *satī* or may lead a virtuous life according to the injunction of the Śāstras. Al Biruni also observes that a woman in India has to choose between two things after the death of her husband—either to burn herself or to remain a widow till her death. It is true that some Smṛtis and Purāṇas encourage the performance of the *satī* rite, as when Bṛhaspati says that a woman is declared devoted to her husband when she is his companion in his weal and woe, and if she dies when he dies, or when the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* declares that a widow who follows her husband on the funeral pyre, though she commits a great sin, does good to the departed soul. The authorities, however, prohibit those wives who have not attained the age of puberty, are pregnant, or have children very young, from becoming a *satī*. Al Biruni similarly reports that women of advanced age and those who had children did not burn

themselves. Although according to the same authority the widow preferred to burn herself because of ill treatment by her relations, it is a fact that the widows were not coerced to do so during this period. As the merchant Sulaiman (ninth century) says, the choice as to whether a woman would burn herself or not lay entirely with her. The practice of the *satī* rite can be traced with the help of historical records throughout this period. The wife of Goparāja, the general of the Gupta king Bhānugupta, is known to have ascended the funeral pyre of her husband in A.D. 510. Some queens of Kashmir and Queen Rājyavatī of Nepal (eighth century) performed the *satī* rite. Guṇḍāmbe, the wife of Nāgadeva, a minister of the Cālukya Satyāśraya of the Deccan (tenth century), burnt herself with her husband, who had lost his life in battle. During the reign of the Coḷa king Rājendra I of South India, a Śūdra woman named Dekabbe burnt herself at the news of the death of her husband in A.D. 1057. The existence of a large number of *satī* memorial tablets proves that the practice was popular in Central India and in the Deccan during this period. King Harṣavardhana's mother Yaśomatī, however, burnt herself to ashes as soon as it became definite that her husband would be passing away within a short time. The practice of performing the *satī* rite was evidently not universal. Many well-known ladies of this period, such as Prabhāvatīdevī (of the Vākāṭaka dynasty of the Deccan), Mayaṇallādevī (mother of Jayasiṁha Siddharāja of Gujarat), Karpūradevī (mother of the Cāhamāna Pṛthvirāja III of Ajmer), and Alhanadevī (mother of the Kalacuri Narasiṁha of Tripurī), did not practise this rite and at the same time were highly esteemed for their devotion to their husbands.

Under the rules of the Smṛtis a widow had to lead an austere life. She slept on the floor and was not allowed to use a cot. She did not put on a bodice and dyed garments, and did not use collyrium in the eyes and yellow pigment on the face nor any kind of scent. She took only one meal a day. She made oblations every day in memory of her husband and listened to recitations of the Purāṇas. Bāṇa in his *Harṣacarita* refers to the tying of the tuft of hair by the widows. Similarly, a Pratihāra inscription of the early tenth century from Pehowa (in the Karnal District of West Punjab), mentions widows having profuse locks of hair. On the other hand, the *Skanda Purāṇa* advocates the tonsuring of widows. It seems that this practice did not come into use prior to the eleventh century.

The re-marriage of widows is not advocated by the Smṛti writers and the Purāṇas. Again, Al Biruni states that in India there is no custom of re-marrying the widow. The system of *niyoga* or levirate is advocated by Nārada following the early Smṛti writers. But later on the practice was

discouraged. As Bṛhaspati remarks, 'On account of the successive deterioration of the (four) ages of the world, it must not be practised by mortals'.

During this period the independent status of women was not recognized. She was dependent on her father before her marriage, on her husband after the marriage, and on her son after the death of her husband. In the absence of a son she was dependent on the nearest relation. On the other hand, the right of the sonless widow to the property of her deceased husband was admitted. In Gujarat, up to the middle of the twelfth century, the property of a person dying without a son escheated to the crown, but the Caulukya Kumārapāla king of Gujarat, abolished that custom and allowed the sonless widow to inherit her husband's property.

WOMEN RULERS AND GENERALS

In actual life, women occasionally participated in the public administration as rulers, regents, and governors. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Deccan was ruled by Queen Raṭṭā. About a century earlier, the same country is found to have been administered by Vijayabhaṭṭārikā of the Cālukya dynasty. Queens Sugandhā and Diddā ruled Kashmir for some time in the tenth century A.D. Tribhuvanamahādevī and her granddaughter Daṇḍimahādevī of the Kara dynasty ruled in Orissa in the eleventh century. The Kākatīya Rudrāmbā occupied the throne of Warangal for some time in the thirteenth century. Marco Polo describes her as a lady of much discretion. She administered her kingdom efficiently ; she was a lover of justice, equality, and peace. Queen Ballamahādevī ruled the Ālupa country (South Kanara) from the capital Varāhakanyā in the thirteenth century. Queen Mayaṇalladevī acted as a regent for her son, the Caulukya Jayasiṁha Siddharāja of Gujarat. Karpūradevī, queen of the Cāhamāna Someśvara of Ajmer, served as a regent for her son Pṛthvīrāja III. Nāyikādevī carried on the administration of Gujarat as a regent during the infancy of her son, the Caulukya Bhīma II. Akkādevī, sister of the Cālukya Jayasiṁha II of the Deccan, acted as the governor of Kisukāḍ. Women also acted as ministers and judges occasionally. Queens Śiryadevī and Mahaladevī flourished in Bhor, Bombay State, in the last quarter of the eleventh century. A lady named Somanāthaiyā acted as a minister of Śiryadevī, and another lady named Balaiyā occupied the post of a judge under Mahaladevī. Sometimes women are found leading the army in the battlefield. Akkādevī, referred to above, is described as fierce in battle and in destroying hostile kings. Some time before A.D. 1047, at the head of an army, she laid siege to the fort of Gokage, modern Gokak, in the Belgaum District. In A.D. 1197 a lady named Umādevī invaded

Belagavatti, in the Shimoga District, Mysore, when it was ruled by the feudatory Mādhavarasa. Cagaladevī, wife of a feudatory of Toragale, led in person an attack on the town of Nīlaguṇḍa, in the Deccan. In A.D. 1178, when Gujarat was invaded by Mohammed Ghori, Nāyikādevī, taking her infant son Caulukya Bhīma II in her lap, conducted the army against the invader and inflicted a severe defeat on him.

RECREATIONS OF WOMEN

A word may be said about the recreations of women. Ma Twan Lin says that in the houses of the Indians the young girls danced and sang with great skill. The statement of Bṛhaspati that a woman must avoid dancing when her husband is abroad, shows the popularity of this art. Among the festivities at the birth of Harṣavardhana, dancing by women of all ranks formed a prominent feature, as described by Bāṇa. Dancing was to the accompaniment of musical instruments, such as tambourines, cymbals, reeds, lutes, and *kāhalas* (drums) with their brazen sounding boxes. The Gaṅga Udayāditya's queen was expert in dancing and singing. All the three queens of the Hoysala Ballāla I were highly accomplished in dancing. Sāvaladevī, the queen of the Kalacuri Somadeva of Kalyāṇa, was well known for her skill in music and dancing, and is said to have displayed her accomplishments in public.

During this period dancing girls known as *devadāsīs* were engaged for temple services. Four hundred of them were attached to the great temple of Tanjore during the reign of the Coḷa Rājarāja I. Bhaṭṭabhavadeva, minister of King Harivarman of East Bengal, gave a hundred dancing girls for the service of the temple of Ananta Vāsudeva. About as many were engaged in the temple of Śiva at Deopārā, in the Rajshahi District, East Bengal, during the reign of Vijayasena. Padmāvatī was the chief of the dancing girls in the temple of Nīlakaṇṭheśvara at Kālañjara during the reign of the Candella Madanavarman. These girls are generally described as living an immoral life. Giving a different picture of the life and character of the *devadāsīs*, however, Marco Polo states that parents sometimes consecrated their daughters to the temples of the gods for whom they had great devotion ; the daughters lived with their parents and on festive occasions went to the temples and entertained the deity with their dance and songs ; they rendered this service till they were married. The dancing girls are known to have enacted dramas occasionally. During the reign of Jātavarman *alias* Vīra Pāṇḍya of South India, a dancing girl named Viraśekharanaṅgai received grants of lands for enacting dramas on festive occasions. Vācaspati Miśra also refers to the dancing girls who gave performances on the stage.

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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE IDEALS OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

INTRODUCTION

IDEALS constitute the very heart and soul of a nation, the real worth and dignity of which have to be judged not only by its actual achievements, but more so by its inner inclinations and inherent endeavours towards a goal that eternally guides its destiny. Hence the true study of a nation means really a study of its aims and ideals, of the means adopted and the paths followed, rather than its actual successes and failures. That is why a real understanding of Indian womanhood essentially depends on that of its ideals in their various aspects.

From time immemorial, India has unequivocally recognized one and only one *summum bonum* of life, viz. *ātmopalabdhi* or self-realization—the realization of the divine in the human, of the spiritual in the physical of the Ātman or Soul in the mind-body complex. It is true that four aims of life (*caturvargas*) are spoken of in Indian literature, viz. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*: moral behaviour, wealth, worldly pleasure, and salvation. But it is at the same time unanimously and unambiguously asserted that *mokṣa* is by far the highest ideal of man. It is in this universal perspective that the whole Indian view of life is to be understood and evaluated.

IDEALS OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

In spite of occasional lapses, India is a country that has always preached and lived the highest philosophical and ethical doctrines of equality and fraternity, of universal love and service. It is in this hoary and holy land that the first as well as the foremost clarion calls of unity and universality were given by our seers, in the form of sublime, yet simple, *mantras*, like *Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman),[1] *Idaṁ amṛtaṁ idaṁ Brahmedaṁ sarvaṁ* (this is immortality; this is Brahman; this is all),[2] *Ayamātmā Brahma* (the Ātman is Brahman),[3] *Tat tvamasi* (thou art that),[4] *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman).[5]

Hence, according to our age-old Indian tradition, there is no distinction between man and man, all being equally Brahman. More specifically, it is also asserted in some places with due dignity that no distinction between

[1] *Chā. U.*, III. 14. 1.
[2] *Bṛ. U.*, II. 5. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, II. 5. 19.
[4] *Chā. U.*, VI. 8. 7.
[5] *Bṛ. U.*, I. 4. 10.

man and woman is ever tolerated by our holy books; nay, a woman is even said to be superior to man. *Strī cāviśeṣāt*[6] (The scripture does not discriminate between man and woman); *Saṁskāro hi ātmani samavaiti, na straiṇaṁ pauruṣaṁ vā vibhāgaṁ apekṣate*[7] (Genius inheres in the Soul—it makes no distinction between man and woman).

That is why the ideals of India are alike for men and women. There is a general misconception that the ideals of Indian women are entirely different from, nay even opposed to, those of men. It is perfectly true that as mothers, as creators and sustainers of life on earth, women have some special duties to perform, some special paths to follow, some special ideals to strive after. But these by no means lower their dignity and status, or narrow down their outlook and ideals. On the contrary, these infinitely elevate and enliven them. Hence, apart from these special aims, rights, and duties, the ideals of Indian women are very much the same as those of Indian men. That is why the women of India, too, have been eternally inspired by the common twin ideals of unity and equality, greatness and fullness, purity and perfection. These have been equally manifested in all the walks in a woman's life, domestic, social, spiritual. Hence it may safely be asserted that in India, *bhūman* (greatness and fullness) constitutes the very life-blood, the very soul of women. In the home or outside, it is these fundamental ideals of infinity and universality that have illumined the lives of our women, throughout the chequered history of Indian womanhood, infinity implying depth of life, universality its breadth. Again, depth stands for inner worth, and breadth for the outer expansion of that worth.

But in spite of the fact that the fundamental tendencies and strivings of all Indians are very much the same, we have also to recognize individual differences and peculiarities befitting the special inclinations and capacities of different persons. Accordingly, two great classes of persons have been generally recognized here: ascetics and householders (or those who are interested in supra-mundane or spiritual values, and those who are interested in mundane or worldly ones). Of course, it has never been contended in India that the above two classes are mutually exclusive or opposed to each other. Still, a difference between the two, corresponding to a difference of emphasis, outlook, and standpoint, has always been admitted. For women also India has recognized two main ideals, viz. that of a *brahmavādinī* and that of a *sadyovadhū*.

A *brahmavādinī* is of an ascetic type, striving for the highest philosophical knowledge: knowledge of Truth, of the Self, of Brahman. Thus

[6] *Kātyāyana Śr. S.*, I. 1. 7.
[7] Rājaśekhara, *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* (GOS), p. 53.

her ideal of life is spiritual well-being. A *sadyovadhū*, on the other hand, is of a domestic type, dedicating herself to the welfare of her family, and spending her time mostly in daily domestic duties of an ordinary kind. Each was great in her own place. Hence there is no real opposition between the status of a *brahmavādinī* and that of a *sadyovadhū*, and no such opposition was tolerated in India, at least in the earliest Vedic Age as also for many centuries later. That was why it was by no means obligatory for a *brahmavādinī* to take the vow of celibacy, renounce the world, and carry on meditations in a far off, secluded mountain cave. On the contrary, quite a number of *brahmavādinīs* who came to be blessed with the realization of Brahman were married women. In the same manner, many *sadyovadhūs* were also of a high, spiritual nature, and even in the midst of their multifarious domestic duties, they strove for spiritual perfection and attained realization. Thus, whether a woman was married or unmarried was not the main thing to count; the main thing was to consider her inner inclinations and ingrained ideals.

We may profitably consider here how these two ideals of spirituality and domesticity have fashioned the lives of Indian women throughout the ages down to the modern times. Only one or two prominent examples from each age will suffice to show the eternal and inexhaustible driving force of this pair of ever-green ideals of Indian womanhood. There might have been times when one was over-emphasized at the expense of the other. But there has never been a time when one was totally absent or suppressed by the other.

WOMEN IN VEDIC LITERATURE

The very high standard of learning, culture and all-round progress reached by Indian women during the Vedic Age is too well-known a fact to need detailed elucidation here. The best proof of this is the fact that the *Ṛg-Veda*, the oldest known literature in the whole world, contains hymns (*sūktas*) by as many as twenty-seven women, called *brahmavādinīs* or women seers. Śaunaka in his *Bṛhaddevatā*[8] (*c.* fifth century B.C.), a work on the *Ṛg-Veda*, has mentioned the names of these twenty-seven women seers. The well-known Vedic commentator Sāyaṇa has mentioned the names of two more of such seers in addition to the above twenty-seven.

During the Vedic Age domestic life was not in any way conceived to

[8] *Ghoṣā godhā viśvavārā apālopaniṣan niṣat,*
brahmajayā juhūr nāma agastyasya svasā ditiḥ;
indrāṇī cendramatā ca saramā romaśorvaśī
lopāmudrā ca nadyaś ca yamī nārī ca śaśvatī
śrīr lakṣmī sarparājñī vāk śraddhā medhā ca dakṣiṇā
rātrī sūryā ca sāvitrī brahmavādinya īritāḥ—II. 89-91.

be inconsistent with spiritual life, and *brahmavādinīs* were not ascetics roaming in forests or squatting in caves after renouncing the world, as ordinarily understood. On the contrary, apart from many *brahmavādinīs* who did not give up family life, even amongst the above twenty-seven more celebrated *brahmavādinīs*, whose hymns were thought to be fit for being included in the *Ṛg-Veda*, many were married or desired to be married. Hence some of their hymns are but simple and frank expressions of their inner, womanly desires for a worthy, loving husband, a happy and prosperous home-life free from co-wives, and so on.[9] The highest ideals of a *brahmavādinī* and a *sadyovadhū* are best illustrated in the celebrated and exhilarating hymns of Vāc[10] and Sūryā[11] respectively.

In the Upaniṣads, which constitute the last part of the Vedas, we meet with the brightest example of a *brahmavādinī* as well as a *sadyovadhū*. The *brahmavādinī* is Gārgī of immortal fame, daughter of the Sage Vacaknu, whose highly learned, philosophical discussions with the great sage Yājña-valkya have been recorded twice in the old and celebrated *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.[12] The glorious example of a *sadyovadhū* too, is found in the same Upaniṣad.[13] When the Sage Yājñavalkya on the eve of his retirement from the world desired to divide his property between his two wives Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī, Maitreyī refused to have it with the profound utterance, 'What should I do with that through which I cannot be immortal?'—which has really made her immortal. Accordingly, she was given the choicest gift of knowledge by her husband in a most illuminating discourse on the unity of the Self. This discourse has the repeated refrain: 'This is the Immortal, this is Brahman, this is All'. Here we find a sublime example of a *sadyovadhū* and a *brahmavādinī* rolled into one. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[14] the lofty ideal of a wife as the other half of the husband has also been beautifully delineated by a very effective simile of the half of a shell.

In the Ṛg-Vedic Gṛhya-Sūtras of Āśvalāyana[15] and Sāṅkhāyana[16] the names of three *brahmavādinīs* are mentioned, viz. Gārgī Vācakanavī, Vaḍavā Prāthitheyī, and Sulabhā Maitreyī.

WOMEN IN GRAMMATICAL LITERATURE

The age of Pāṇini (fifth century B.C.) continued the Vedic tradition of culture and education. Those *brahmavādinīs* who themselves taught were reverentially called *upādhyāyā* or *upādhyāyī* and *ācāryā*, while the

[9] Cf. *R. V.*, V. 28; VIII 80; X. 30, 109, 145; etc.
[10] *Ibid.*, X. 125.
[11] *Ibid.*, X. 85.
[12] III. 6; 8.
[13] II. 4.
[14] I. 4. 3.
[15] III. 4. 4.
[16] IV. 10.

sadyovadhūs who were wives of teachers were called *upādhyāyānī* and *ācāryāṇī*. Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita in his *Siddhānta Kaumudī* explains the first two terms as *yā tu svayaṁ eva adhyāpikā* (She who herself is a teacher). In the commentary *Bāla-manoramā* by Vāsudeva Dīkṣita on the above work the same view is corroborated. Both Pāṇini and Patañjali refer to the high Vedic knowledge acquired by the *brahmavādinīs* during the Vedic Age necessitating special names for them. Thus, women scholars of the Kaṭha School were called *Kaṭhī*; of the *Ṛg-Veda*, *Bahavṛcā*. Brāhmaṇa women scholars of the Grammar of Āpiśali were called *Āpiśālī*, and of the Mīmāṁsā School of Kāśakṛtsna, Kāśakṛtsnā (Patañjali). Pupils of the woman scholar and teacher Auḍamedhyā were called '*Auḍamedhā*'.

WOMEN IN THE EPICS AND THE PURĀṆAS

In the immortal epics of India, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, too, we find many instances of the above two types of Indian women, ascetic and domestic. A magnificent example of a *brahmavādinī* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is Anasūyā, wife, in the truest sense of the term, of the Sage Atri. She, too, practised severe penances constantly, spent the whole of her life in deep meditation, and reached such heights of spiritual perfection as are rarely reached by even great seers.[17] Another celebrated woman ascetic of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is Śramaṇī Śabarī, a low-caste woman. She was the disciple of the great sage Mātaṅga and had her hermitage on the bank of the lake Pampā. She is described as wearing bark and matted locks, as having reached the highest standard of asceticism, and as being honoured by great ascetics.[18]

On the other hand, the highest manifestation of domestic perfection in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, nay in the whole of Indian literature, is found in the inimitable personality of Sītā, the idol of Indian womanhood throughout the ages. In fact, as Swami Vivekananda rightly asserted, all the various ideals of Indian womanhood, throughout the long and chequered history of India, have been concentrated and consummated in this one, unique, incomparable ideal of Sītā as wife, as mother, as one endowed with infinite purity of heart, strength of character, courage, and confidence. Her holy life-story is too well-known to need recounting here. But what strikes us most in her character is this superb combination of softness and hardness, so aptly described by Bhavabhūti in the *Uttara-Rāmacarita* as the main characteristic of great persons like Rāma.

The *Mahābhārata*, too, is resplendent with a galaxy of great women fulfilling their destinies, pursuing their ideals, and attaining their ends in different spheres of life in a manner at once simple and superb. As a

[17] *Rām.*, II. 117-9. [18] *Ibid.*, III. 74.

glorious example of a *brahmavādinī* during that age, mention may be made of Sulabhā of immortal fame.[19] She belonged to the clan of Rājarṣi (kingly sage) Pradhāna. But she being a great scholar, no suitable bridegroom could be found for her. Accordingly she became an ascetic for life, and roamed about alone from place to place in search of knowledge. Other celebrated *brahmavādinīs* of the *Mahābhārata* are the daughter of Śāṇḍilya described as a *brāhmaṇī* who has attained perfection, who has adopted the vow of celibacy and purity, who practises *yoga*, who has reached heaven, who has attained perfection in austerity, and who is an ascetic,[20] and Śivā, described as a *brāhmaṇī* who has attained perfection, and who has mastered the Vedas. These are not the only instances of highly learned, ascetic women found in the *Mahābhārata*.

Far more numerous are the instances of women who led dedicated lives at home. Mention need be made only of Gāndhārī, Kuntī, Draupadī, Sāvitrī, Damayantī, Śakuntalā, and Satyabhāmā amongst a great galaxy of noble women who, though housewives, were also reputed scholars and saintly characters. The single case of Gāndhārī proves what heights of excellence wifehood and motherhood could reach. An exemplary wife, a *sahadharmiṇī* in the truest sense of the word who went to the length of bandaging her own eyes for the sake of her blind husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra, she yet never hesitated to remonstrate with him when she thought he was in the wrong. That was why she openly and firmly requested him to disown their sinful sons Duryodhana and the rest.[21] Her superb injunction: '*Yato dharma tato jayaḥ*' (Let Victory pertain to the righteous), has become a proverb in India. Another fiery utterance of a mother has also become equally famous. She was Vidulā, who sternly reprimanded her son Sañjaya when he, being defeated by the king of Sind was leading a life of abject dejection. To inspire him to fight for his lost royal glory, she used the following classic simile: '*Muhūrtaṁ jvalitaṁ śreyaḥ, na tu dhūmāyitaṁ ciram*' (It is far better to blaze up even for a moment than to go on smoking continuously).

The Purāṇas of India present the philosophical and ethical doctrines of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads in a simple form through dialogues and narrations in which figure men and women of great eminence. One of the most celebrated women of the Purāṇas is Madālasā, the consort of King Ṛtadhvaja. She was at once a great scholar, a saintly woman, a dutiful housewife, and a devoted wife and mother.[22] Another saintly woman of the Purāṇas is Devahūti, wife of the great sage and *prajāpati* (patriarch) Kardama and mother of the greater sage Kapila, the propounder

[19] *Mbh.*, XII. 320.
[20] *Ibid.*, IX. 54. 6.
[21] *Ibid.*, II. 75. 8-10.
[22] *Mārk. P.*, XX-XLIV.

of the Sāṁkhya system of Indian philosophy. Her philosophical discourses with her learned husband and son go to prove her unique spiritual attainments, even though she lived a household life.[23] The eternal idols of Indian womanhood, viz. Satī and Umā, shine in their never-fading glory in many of the Purāṇas, as the brightest examples of devoted wives dedicating their whole lives to the service of their lords.

WOMEN IN THE SMṚTIS

The position of women in India gradually deteriorated as the golden Vedic ideals of unity and equality began to fade off through the passage of time. During the period of the Smṛtis—the period of codification of social laws—women were bracketed with the Śūdras, and were denied the right to study the Vedas, to utter Vedic *mantras*, and to perform Vedic rites. Hence, during such an age, it was not to be expected that women would continue to enjoy the old privilege of choosing a life of celibacy and asceticism. On the other hand, marriage or domestic life became compulsory for women, and unquestioning devotion to, and self-effacing service of, husbands their only duty. To quote the wellknown dictum of Manu:[24] 'A woman is protected by her father during childhood, by her husband during youth, and by her sons during old age. She is never fit for freedom.' But mothers were honoured, as before, as the very pivots of their families, and wives as *sahadharmiṇīs* or spiritual partners of their spouses. Here we are happily reminded of another dictum of Manu,[25] which, too, has almost passed into a classic: 'An *ācārya* or a Vedic teacher excels ten *upādhyāyas* or salaried sub-teachers in glory, a father excels a hundred *ācāryas* but a mother excels a thousand fathers.' In fact, all the spiritual strivings of men were considered useless, unless their wives also participated. Hence, according to the famous grammarian Pāṇini, the ultimate etymological meaning of the word *patnī* or wife is: 'One who participates in the religious ceremonies of her husband'.

Thus in the Smṛtis, too, the women of India are pictured as setting before themselves not only the ideal of domestic efficiency but also, and above all, that of spiritual supremacy, which alone makes one a conqueror in the truest sense of the term.

WOMEN IN THE MODERN AGE

During the modern age, the women of India are, indeed, standing at the cross-roads, which they had never done before. Even during the middle ages, when foreign invasions and conquests made the position of women the worst in history, the problems that are facing them to-day were not there.

[23] *Bhāg. P.*, III. 21-33. [24] IX. 3; Cf. V. 147. [25] II. 145.

For those foreigners who became the rulers of India no longer remained foreigners ruling the conquered land from their distant home, they soon became sons of the soil, part and parcel of the country itself. But during the modern period the conquest was made by a foreign race from a far-off country which neither settled in India nor identified itself with her interests. Hence the impact of the foreign, western ideas and ideals on our country and society, which has been almost one-sided, has changed our lives to an extent never possible before. That is why the women of India now find themselves today facing an unprecedented dilemma, namely, the choice between the old and the new, the eastern traditionalism and the western modernism.

At this critical juncture in the lives of Indian women, both the ancient ideals of spiritualism and homebound life seem to be absolutely out of date ; a modern girl seems neither to care for religion and spiritual perfection nor hanker after domestic life as before. But has the eternal ideal of India really changed to that extent, and can it ever do so? It has been repeatedly seen in the long and variegated history of this country that its inmost soul has ever remained untouched in spite of all external appearances to the contrary. That is why even during the turbulent modern age of over-materialism, over-realism, over-individualism, over-rationalism, and over-cynicism we find clear proofs that the immortal ideals of Indian womanhood are still there, inspiring and heartening thousands of women in all walks of life.

IMMORTAL IDEALS OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

For a clear proof we may point to the sublime personality of the Holy Mother, Sri Saradamani Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva. It is she who at the beginning of the present century combined in her lofty life the twin ideals of a *brahmavādinī* and a *sadyovadhū* in a manner at once unique and inspiring.

What strikes us most in the life of the Holy Mother is this wonderful synthesis of ordinary home life and the highest spirituality. That these two are not opposed to each other, but that spirituality is the very basis of ordinary life, is the greatest message of the life of the Holy Mother to all and sundry. Thus it was she who proved beyond doubt that even a *brahmavādinī* could be a *sadyovadhū* and *vice versa*. For although she admitted like the holy sages of old that it was by no means possible for all women to give up the world, go to a forest, and practise austerities there, yet she repeatedly insisted that even those who stayed at home and led the ordinary married life must be *brahmavādinīs*, in the sense of being spiritually minded and moulding their lives according to spiritual and

ethical maxims. Simply because they have chosen a domestic life, they must not lead a narrow, selfish, uncontrolled, and unworthy life. They must not remain submerged in the mire of worldly life, but must spring up like beautiful lotuses, spreading their charm and fragrance far and wide.

In this way, even in our ever changing, aggressive, restless, and worried modern age, we are infinitely blessed to have before us this benign example of the Holy Mother, a *brahmavādinī* and a *sadyovadhū* in perfect fusion and highest development.

CONCLUSION

This very brief and rapid survey of the ideals of Indian womanhood through the ages will suffice to show that in spite of many changes as regards educational facilities and domestic, social, political, legal, and economic rights, the women of India have remained fundamentally unchanged. This is due to the fact that their ideals, their visions, and their outlooks, manifesting the perennial culture, and the ever-throbbing heart of India, are at bottom one and the same. This sameness of ideals, of course, does not indicate any static stagnation in the course of India's progress; it is rather a clear sign of its dynamic development. For when a nation starts on its zigzag, hazardous journey towards its cherished goal, it has to go through ups and downs, through pitfalls and labyrinths, generation after generation. And so, unless there be the same sustaining spirit, and the same indefatigable drive behind, the nation concerned may lose its way and flounder in despondency in its long and arduous struggle. Hence the ideals of a nation are not something to become stale with age. On the contrary, as the nation cannot change its soul, so it cannot also change its ideals. The sameness of its ideals rather shows its firmness of purpose and dynamism of outlook, and enables one to gauge its depth of feeling and strength of will, which alone make it what it is. Hence the eternity of our ideals is something to be proud of, the bed-rock of our culture, the strongest cement in our multifarious civilization which is a unity in diversity. This is specially so when this eternal ideal of India, for men or for women, outside or inside, is, as pointed out above, one and only one, viz. spiritual development. Spirituality is something that can never grow old, never fade off, never die. The women of India, too, have naturally been imbued with the same supreme Ideal all through the ages. As housewives, as ascetics, and as both combined, they have always kept burning the torch of their inner spirituality, purity, and beauty, their inherent sweetness, softness, and spirit of service.

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FOREIGN ELEMENTS IN INDIAN POPULATION

PREHISTORIC MIXTURE OF RACES

FROM the earliest times India has received successive waves of foreign peoples with diverse languages, cultures, and racial affiliations. Of the two main palaeolithic industries of India—that of pebble tools with its primary focus in the North-West, and that of bifacial tools predominant in the South—the first is affiliated to the comparable industries of South-East Asia, and the second to its counterparts in Europe and Africa. What forces of diffusion were at work to produce similar tool-types over such widely-dispersed lands it is difficult to guess, but the possibility of an actual migration of palaeolithic folks from different directions, though not yet substantiated by the find of contemporary skeletal remains, is not ruled out. In the Neolithic Age we find the neolithic types of East India again similar to those of South-East Asia and southern China—indicating a cultural wave reaching India from that direction. In this case as well, it is not unlikely that the wave had its genesis in a folk migration. There are strong grounds for believing that the Dravidians came to India from the east Mediterranean region long before the Aryans. An extra-Indian origin of the great Indus valley civilization of the third millennium B.C. is not proved, though its contacts with contemporary riverine civilizations of West Asia are abundantly clear. There is little doubt, however, that in the next millennium the Vedic Aryans poured into India from the north-west bringing with them an altogether new culture. By the fourth century before Christ the creation of the 'Indian Man' and the main fabric of Indian civilization is almost accomplished. Behind this creation lies the fusion of four principal language-culture groups (loosely called 'races') in blood, speech, and culture. They are the Austric or Austro-Asiatic (Niṣādas), the Mongoloid or Sino-Tibetan (Kirātas), the Dravidian (Drāviḍas), and the Aryans (Āryas). Of these, the Austric people entered India from the west and spread all over India, and are now represented by such primitive tribes as the Kolas and the Muṇḍas, living in the hills and forests of central and eastern India. The Mongoloid peoples, however, emigrated from the east and settled mostly in the Himalayan sub-tracts and eastern India. The impact of the Dravidians was much stronger than that of any of these races, and they practically Dravidianized the whole of peninsular India. The Vedic Aryans, the last of these peoples to settle in India, however, Aryanized the whole of India by their language. When transformed into classical Sanskrit by large borrowings

from the Austrics and the Dravidians, it became the *lingua franca* of the Indian culture and the sacred language of Hinduism (in its comprehensive sense embracing Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism, and Jainism). The food habits, dress, furniture, and architecture of the Aryans came to be greatly influenced by the new surroundings, while their ritual beliefs and practices underwent far-reaching changes due to the impact of the pre-Aryan settlers. The very name Ārya lost its ethnic significance and came to mean 'nobility and aristocracy of character and temperament'.

The ethnic intrusions, however, continued unabated, and the country lay exposed to the successive invasions and infiltrations of the Persians, Greeks, Scytho-Parthians, Ābhīras, Kuṣāṇas, Hūṇas, Gurjaras, etc. one after the other. By this time, however, India had developed her own distinctive culture, in the midst of which none of these foreigners could maintain their individuality for any length of time; they learnt the language, adopted the names and the religions of the vanquished, and became one with them. In the present paper it is proposed to deal with the more important foreign peoples who entered India from the sixth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. and their absorption in, and contribution to, Indian culture.

IMMIGRATIONS IN HISTORIC TIMES

The exact process by which the foreigners were brought into the Hindu fold and merged in the general body of the Indian people can only be indicated in general outline. The ancient lawgivers did not lay down any special purificatory rites and ceremonies which the outsiders had to undergo in order to find room in Hindu society. On the contrary, efforts were not lacking to ignore the non-Indian origin of the foreigners by regarding them as the offspring of inter-caste marriage, or as belonging to one of the castes and having lost in status in consequence of heretical tendencies. Thus according to Manu,[1] the Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Cīnas, Kirātas, Daradas, Khaśas, and others were originally Kṣatriyas who were degraded to the status of Śūdras owing to their non-observance of the sacred rites. In such statements, no doubt, is to be detected the *ex post facto* recognition of the existence of foreigners in Hindu society by giving them a place in the *cāturvarṇya* (four-caste) system. In the *Mahābhārata*,[2] Indra, in reply to a query of Māndhātṛ regarding the duties to be performed by the Yavanas, Śakas, Tuṣāras, Pahlavas, Cīnas, and other alien peoples, prescribes the duties of obedience to parents, preceptors, kings, and hermits, performance of Vedic rites, digging of wells, making of presents to *dvijas* (the twice born), abstention from injuring, absence of wrath, truthfulness, purity, peacefulness, maintenance of wives and children, and performance of sacrifices in

[1] X. 43-44.

[2] XII. 65. 13-22.

honour of the *pitṛs* (manes) and performance of the *pāka-yajñas*. All this indicates that foreigners were expected to practise the same normal pieties as the Hindus, and the latter in return considered them henceforth as belonging to their own social organization. The Bhakti cult, again, was also a prime factor in breaking the barrier between the native and the outsider. Thus according to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,[3] taking resort to Viṣṇu and his devotees is enough for the purification of the Kirātas, Hūṇas, Andhras, Pulindas, Pukvasas, Ābhīras, Suhmas, Yavanas, Khaśas, etc. as also other persons who were sinful. Instances are also not rare in which the Indians in ancient times contracted matrimonial alliances with the foreign immigrants, and this also played a great rôle in the Indianization of the latter. The wonderful assimilative power of the Indians helped to Hinduize the alien races so much so that when they were absorbed, there was hardly anything left which could mark them off as socially and culturally distinct from the children of the soil.

But it will be a misrepresentation of fact to state that the foreigners only took and gave nothing. The Indians, by reciprocation of thought and culture, learnt much from them. They were influenced by the religion, science, and art of the newcomers. Foreign words crept into the local languages, and changes were also brought about in Indian costume. The Indians imbibed some of the beliefs of the alien peoples. But whatever they borrowed they absorbed completely and made their own by the stamp of their genius. The cross-currents of diverse cultures could only ruffle the outer surface of Hinduism for the time being, but in the inner depths it underwent little change.

THE IRANIANS

There is enough in the Vedas and the Avesta to show that the Vedic Aryans and the ancient Iranians had a close relationship in language, religion, traditions, rituals, and beliefs. But this became more intimate when the Achaemenians became the rulers of Iran. The north-western part of India formed part of the empire of Darius, the Achaemenian Emperor (*c.* 522-486 B.C.); for in his Behistun inscription (*c.* 520-18 B.C.) Gadāra, i.e. Gandhāra (Peshawar and Rawalpindi Districts) figures in the list of twenty-three foreign countries that came to him. It is not unlikely that the conquest of Gandhāra was due to Cyrus, the founder of the empire himself (558-30 B.C.). To the credit of Darius goes the conquest of Hindu (Sindhu

[3] II. 4. 18:
Kirāta-Hūṇāndhra-Pulinda-Pukkasā
Ābhīra-Suhmā Yavanāḥ Khaśādayaḥ
Ye'nye ca pāpā yadupāśrayāśrayāḥ
Śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ.

or the Indus valley). According to Herodotus, India formed the twentieth satrapy of his empire. Though the Iranian conquest of Gandhāra and the Indus valley was not very long-lived (these regions had certainly thrown off the foreign yoke by the time of Alexander's invasion in 327-26 B.C.), the influx of some Iranian population, in the trail of conquest, resulted in the introduction of a few quaint customs in India. That Taxila was influenced by the Iranian method of disposal of the dead is evident from the statement of Aristoboulos as quoted by Strabo:[4] 'The dead are thrown out to be devoured by vultures.' The marriage market of Taxila, where girls were given off in marriage, recalls a similar Babylonian practice which might have been introduced into India through Iran. The language of the north-west was affected by Iranian contacts. Thus the word *dipi* (for Indian *lipi*) and *nipiṣṭa* (for *likhita*) in the Kharoṣṭhī versions of the rock edicts of Aśoka occurring at Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra bespeak Iranian influence. The introduction of Kharoṣṭhī itself, now a dead script, is an outcome of India's intercourse with Iran, for it was evolved out of Aramaic, the 'court script' of the Achaemenian rulers. That the Aramaic language and script were introduced into India is proved by an Aramaic inscription found at Taxila. Again, the similarity between the preambles of the Achaemenian and Aśokan inscriptions may not be an accident.[5] The influence of Achaemenian court art and architecture on those of the Mauryas, which has been widely noted and commented upon, appears to have been due to the direct importation of artisans from Persia into India.

Mention should be made in this connection of the Magi, a section of the Iranian priestly class, who entered India probably in the wake of the Scytho-Parthians. They are known in India as Maga-dvijas or Maga Brāhmaṇas. A detailed, though legendary, account of their immigration into India is given in some Purāṇas. The substance of what is given in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*,[6] is as follows: Śāmba, a son of Kṛṣṇa, was stricken with leprosy. He was cured of the disease through the worship of the Sun-god, and he erected a temple of the god at Mitravana on the Candrabhāgā. No Brāhmaṇa being willing to serve as priest at the temple, Śāmba had to bring in eighteen families of the sun-worshipping Maga Brāhmaṇas, descendants of Jarasabda (viz. Jalagambu, Jarasastra, evidently Zoroaster) from Śākadvīpa, and settle them at Śāmbapura, built by him. These Brāhmaṇas were given daughters of the Bhoja line in marriage and hence became known as Bhojakas. The association of Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion, and some of the special customs of the Maga Brāhmaṇas, such as wearing the girdle called *avyaṅga* (the *aiwyaonghan* of the Avesta and the *kusti* of the modern Parsees), having beards, eating in silence, the prohibition

[4] XV. 1. 62. [5] *IA*, XX. pp. 255-56. [6] *Bhav. P.*

of touching corpses, using *barsma* (Āvestān *baresman*, modern *barsom*) in place of *darbha* (*kuśa* grass), etc., leave no room for doubt that they were the ancient Sun-worshippers of Iran.

The Magas did not confine themselves to Śāmbapura, identified with the modern Multan, where Hiuen Tsang saw a grand Sun-temple in the seventh century. They soon spread over other parts of India. Ptolemy (middle of the second century A.D.) vouches for the existence of the 'Brachmanai Magoi' in the South. An inscription from Deo-Baranark (District Shahabad) records the initial grant of a village to the Sun-god by the ruler Bālāditya in favour of the Bhojaka Sūryamitra, its renewal by Sarvavarman and Avantivarman in favour of the Bhojakas Haṁsamitra and Ṛṣimitra, and its continuance by Jīvitagupta II (early eighth century) in favour of the Bhojaka Durdharamitra. The Govindapur inscription of 1137-38 attests to the existence in Gayā of a highly cultured Maga family, celebrated for its learning, Vedic studies, and poetic faculty, 'whom Śāmba himself brought hither'.[7] Other references to the Magas in inscriptions show that they completely amalgamated themselves with the Hindus by adopting Indian names, manners, and customs, and except for the accidental mention of the term Maga, it is impossible for us to distinguish them as foreigners. They took part in every sphere of our activity and enriched our poetry too. They contributed much to astronomy and astrology. The famous astronomer Varāhamihira was himself a Maga. The descendants of the Maga Brāhmaṇas are still interested in astrology, foretelling, divination, propitiation of planetary deities (*graha-yāga*), etc. As they enjoyed the gifts made for the propitiation of the *grahas* (planets), they are called *graha-vipras* (astrologers). But the most important contribution of the Magi priests (who were elevated to the status of Brāhmaṇas in some indigenous texts) was the introduction of a particular form of Sun-worship which is different from the ancient indigenous mode. Varāhamihira directs that the installation of the Sūrya images should be made by the Magas, who were the fit persons to worship the god.[8] Iconographic texts enjoin that the images of Sūrya should be dressed like a northerner with legs covered, that he should wear a coat of mail and a girdle. The early representations of the god actually follow these injunctions. In later times, however, attempts were made to Indianize the foreign features by discarding some of them and by inventing stories to interpret the others.

The *Maga-vyakti* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Miśra contains an elaborate account of these Maga Brāhmaṇas. The descendants of the Magas are known in different places by different names. In Rajputānā they are called Sevak and Bhojak. They are known in Bengal as Graha-vipras and Ācārya

[7] *E.I.*, II. pp. 330 ff.

[8] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 60. 19.

Brāhmaṇas, interested in astrology and the lore of the planets. Some of the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are Āyurvedic physicians, some are priests in Rajput families, while others are landholders. There are also many who have taken to other professions.

A section of the Kāmbojas, originally living on the north-western frontier of India, most probably in Afghanistan, and belonging to the *Pārasaka-vaṇṇa,* according to the Buddhaghoṣa, came and permanently settled in different parts of India. They lent their name to some of the localities occupied by them. A few of the families went to the extent of carving out principalities like the one temporarily eclipsing the fortunes of the Pālas of eastern India in the tenth century A.D. They acclimatized themselves to the Indian soil and thoroughly identified themselves with its people, accepting their culture and creed. The case of Jagannātha is one of many such instances. A Smṛti treatise called *Jagannāthaprakāśa* composed by Sura Miśra in the sixteenth century owes its origin to the patronage of this Kāmboja scion. The Pehoa *praśasti* (panegyric) of the reign of Mahendrapāla of Kanauj mentions Acyuta of Kāmboja descent, son of Viṣṇu. The names of the father and son indicate that they were thoroughly Indianized. The Kambohs or Kāmbohs living in upper India are generally regarded as the descendants of the ancient Kāmbojas.

THE GREEKS

The Greeks, referred to in early Indian literature as the Yavanas, were no doubt known to the Indians earlier than the times of the Macedonian king Alexander. Pāṇini (*c.* fifth century B.C.) is acquainted with the word.[9] Kātyāyana (fourth century B.C.) explains the term *yavanānī* as the script of the Yavanas. The word *yavana* (Prakrit *yona, yonaka*) itself is Sanskritized from the Old Persian *yauna,* by which name the Ionian Greeks, and later on all Greeks, were designated by the Persians. The exact word *yauna* occurs in the *Mahābhārata.*[10] The connotation of the word in later times gradually extended to the Romans, westerners, and all foreigners, including the Mohammedans.

Alexander, following the Persian system of government by Satraps (Hellenized form of the old Persian *Kṣatra-pāvan*), constituted his Indian conquests into several satrapies and founded a few cities on the Indian soil to serve as outposts of his ever-lengthening route of conquest and to shelter the Greeks who might help in the maintenance of Greek sovereignty. But his plan did not materialize owing to his sudden death and the rise of Candragupta Maurya, who liberated India from the yoke of servitude. By 305 B.C., however, renewed Indo-Greek relationship started when Seleukos,

[9] IV. 1. 49.

[10] XII. 207. 43.

the successor of Alexander in the eastern part of his empire, after a trial of strength, concluded with Candragupta a treaty cemented by a *jus connubii* (right by marriage), and ceded satrapies covered by Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Makran to the latter. The inclusion within India of these territories brought her closer to the western world and paved the way for Aśoka's intimate contact with the Greek rulers of the West. Aśoka also refers in his edicts to the Greeks within his empire. One Yavana Rāja Tuṣāspha (the name sounds Persian) was his governor of Saurāṣṭra. The love of the Mauryas for the Greeks is too well known. That they were particularly mindful of the interests of foreigners is amply attested to by the classical writers, who affirm the maintenance of a separate department to look after the foreigners during Candragupta's regime.

By taking advantage of the weakness of Aśoka's successors, the independent Greek chiefs of Bactria made frequent incursions into India in the beginning of the second century B.C., which have left echoes in works of Indian literature like Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, the *Gārgī Saṁhitā*, etc. Demetrius was the first Bactrian Greek to establish his hold in India. After the loss of Bactria to the Scythian invaders, who were themselves forced to quit their Sogdian habitat by the Yueh-chis, the Greeks were compelled to confine themselves to eastern Afghanistan and north-western India. Weakened by their internecine strife, they ultimately succumbed to the Scytho-Parthians in the first century B.C. The evidence of coins attests to the rule of more than thirty Indo-Greek rulers within a period of less than two centuries. As they were isolated from their motherland by the great wedge of the mighty Parthian empire, the Indo-Greek rulers, though inheritors of a highly advanced culture, developed from the very beginning an attitude different from that of the Seleucid rulers of Asia. They adopted Indian features on their coins. Thus Demetrius issued square coins with a Prakrit translation of the Greek legend in Kharoṣṭhī. Some even used the Brāhmī script and purely Indian motifs. The attempt of the Greeks to absorb Indian deities accounts for the non-Hellenic attributes in the persons of the Greek divinites represented on the coins.

The name of the Greek ruler Menander is immortalized in the Pali Buddhist work *Milindapañha*, 'Questions of Milinda', the Sanskrit original of which is believed to have been written in the first century B.C. and was very likely based on genuine tradition. Milinda (Menander) is said to have gone round with five hundred *yonakas*, defeating religious teachers in argument, till he met the Buddhist *thera* (monk) Nāgasena, who succeeded in converting him. The use of the wheel (*dharma-cakra*) and of the title *dhārmika* on his coins may indicate his inclination towards that faith. Further, a relic-casket discovered at Shinkot, about twenty

miles to the north-west of the confluence of the Panjkora and the Swat, recording the enshrinement of some corporeal relics of the Buddha by one Viyakamitra during Menander's rule, attests to the flourishing condition of Buddhism under him. As if to counteract the Buddhist learnings of Menander, Heliodoros, the Greek envoy of Antialkidas of the rival house of Eukratides at the court of the Śuṅga ruler Kāśīputra Bhāgabhadra (*c.* 125 B.C.), became an ardent *bhāgavata* (devotee of Viṣṇu) and erected a Garuḍa-pillar at Besnagar (Bhilsa). The second part of the inscription recording the above facts speaks of three immortal precepts, *dama* (self control), *tyāga* (renunciation), and *apramāda* (alertness), the practice of which should lead to heaven. The inscription shows that the tenets of the religion were exalted enough to captivate the Greeks and catholic enough to admit foreigners.

The process of Indianization of the Greeks through religion was accelerated as time went by. Two railing inscriptions of Stūpa I at Sanchi record the pious donations of a Yavana hailing from Śvetadvīpa in the first century B.C. The magnificent *caitya* (Buddhist temple) at Karle, dating from the first-second century A.D., owes its origin in a considerable measure to the munificence of foreigners, e.g. 'a Yavana of the Yaśavardhanas', and 'a Yavana of the Culayakhas (Kṣudrayakṣas)'—all from Dhenukākaṭa. Further inscriptions from the same cave record the donations of other traders from Dhenukākaṭa, indicating that the place had a large colony of foreign merchants who actively associated themselves with the excavation of the *caitya*. Donative inscriptions of Yavanas are not lacking in other caves, e.g. those of Junnar (Poona) and Nasik. All these records show that the Yavanas were converts to Buddhism, and some of them even prove that they adopted Indian names as well. One of the inscriptions in cave seventeen at Nasik records the gift of a cave, a *caitya* hall, and a cistern to monks by the Yonaka Indrāgnidatta, son of Dharmadeva, together with his son Dharmarakṣita for the sake of his parents and in honour of all Buddhas. One Theodorus, a Meridarkh, is known, from his Kharoṣṭhī inscription, to have enshrined the relics of the Buddha in the Swat region. A few other Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from the north-west have the same tale to tell, though in these cases, in the absence of the word *yavana* we have to identify the Greeks only through their names.

An oft-quoted passage from the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali[11] indicates that in the second century B.C. the Śakas and Yavanas lived outside the pale of Āryāvarta, but were regarded as highclass Śūdras eligible, unlike many local Śūdras, to offer sacrifices—a fact supported by inscriptions and

[11] On *Pāṇini*, II. 4. 10.

archaeological finds at Besnagar—and to take meals out of vessels, without permanently defiling them. The *Manu Saṁhitā*[12] regards the Yavanas as degraded Kṣatriyas reduced to the status of *vṛṣalas* (commonly meaning Śūdras). The Dharma-Sūtra of Gautama[13] regards them as the offspring of a marriage between a Kṣatriya and a Śūdra woman. From these meagre references it appears that the Greeks, unlike many indigenous tribes, evoked little repugnance among the Indians. The latter initiated them into their own faiths and did not consider it beneath their dignity to serve as their priests. They were not blind to the superiority of the Greeks in some branches of knowledge, and were ready to learn and acknowledge them. This frame of mind is nowhere better illustrated than in the following verse of the *Gārgī Saṁhitā*:

> *Mlecchā hi yavanāsteṣu samyacchāstramidaṁ sthitam*
> *Ṛṣivat te'pi pūjyante kimpunar daivavid dvijaḥ*

'The Greeks are Mlecchas, but amongst them this science is duly established ; therefore even they (although Mlecchas) are honoured as *ṛṣis* ; how much more then an astrologer who is a Brāhmaṇa.'[14] The extent of Greek influence upon Indian astronomy becomes apparent when we study the Indian astronomical and astrological works of the fifth-sixth century. They contain many references to the Greek and Roman astronomers and astronomical works, and they have borrowed many terms and ideas from the Greek system. The ideas of *rāśis* (the twelve lunar mensions) appear to have been directly adopted from the West. The Macedonian calendar survived for a long time in India, as we have instances of its use in the Scytho-Parthian and Kuṣāṇa records. The influence of the Indo-Greek rulers upon their foreign successors and also the indigenous rulers was equally manifest in the sphere of numismatics. In respect of weight, system of manufacture, material and size, their silver coins inaugurated a standard which was imitated not only by the Scytho-Parthians but also by the indigenous tribes and rulers like the Yaudheyas, the Audumbaras, Vṛṣṇi Rājanyagaṇa, the Kuṇindas, etc. The different Satrapal families also copied it, the obverse bearing invariably the head of the king. Even traces of the corrupt and meaningless Greek legends were retained. The Greek denomination 'Drachm' itself was naturalized and Sanskritized into *drama*, shortened into *dāma* in later times. The latter name, signifying price survives even now.

One of the most permanent records of the intermingling of the Indian and Hellenistic cultures is the Gandhāra art, which had its cradle in

[12] X. 43-44.
[13] I. 4. 17.
[14] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* (Ed. H. Kern. Calcutta 1865), Preface, p. 35.

north-west India.[15] It registers the marriage of Buddhist religion with Hellenistic art. In the Buddhist images produced by this school, which remained active in the first five centuries of the Christian era, one sees the Indian iconographic concepts in Greek garb. Though its imprint on later Indian art is negligible, its influence upon the Buddhist art of Central Asia is overwhelming. The Greeks also no doubt brought with them their own architecture. Though no Indo-Greek city has as yet been laid bare by excavation, the Scytho-Parthian level of the second city of Taxila, Sirkap, is regarded as having been laid out on a Greek model. The plan of the Scytho-Parthian Taxila followed the symmetrical chess-board pattern of Greek cities, with streets crossing at right angles and regularly-aligned houses. Outside the city is a temple with a Greek plan, Ionic pillars, and classical mouldings.

THE ROMANS

Unlike the Greeks, the Romans came to India not as conquerors, but as traders.[16] Maritime trade between India and the Mediterranean world received a fillip with the discovery of the periodicity of the south-western monsoon wind ('wind of Hippalus', as the Romans called it), promoting direct navigation across the seas instead of the circuitous and laborious coastal voyages. The Romans established a series of trading stations on the west and east coasts of India and no doubt travelled inland for purposes of trade. Excavation has brought to light one such Indo-Roman emporium on the east coast, Arikamedu,[17] near Pondicherry, probably the Podouke of the *Periplus* (later part of the first century) and Ptolemy. Finds from the excavations conducted there include gems bearing in intaglio the motif of Graeco-Roman workmanship, sherds of the red-glazed Arretine ware produced in Italy in the first centuries before and after Christ and stamped with the Italian potters' names, amphorae (wine jars) of Mediterranean origin, and Roman lamps and glass objects—all bespeaking the importance of the port, which witnessed a regular marketing of the Mediterranean commodities. Indo-Roman trade brought impressively huge quantities of Roman coins, hoards of which have been found mostly in peninsular India. The imprint of the Roman coinage on the contemporary Indian currency

[15] It is noteworthy that the Gandhāra art, deeply imbued with the classical tradition and technique, did not originate—or, at any rate was not extensively practised—when the Greeks actually held the Gandhāra region; it became popular only after their disappearance as a political power, during the rule of the Scytho-Parthians and Kuṣāṇas. Scholars are not agreed upon the source of its inspiration; and according to some, the Roman element is not to be discounted.

[16] It is not unlikely that some of the Yavana traders of the cave inscriptions mentioned above were in reality Romans and not Greeks.

[17] *Ancient India*, No. II (July 1946), pp. 17 ff. Also publications de l' institut Français d' indologie, No. 2. Les Relations extérieures de l' Inde, p. 18.

is appreciable. The busts on the obverse of the coins of Nahapāna are nothing but imitations of those of the Roman emperors. The Kuṣāṇa gold issues were struck on the standard of Roman gold coins (*denarius aureus*). The new weight system was continued by the early Gupta monarchs, whose gold issues were directly copied from those of the Kuṣāṇas. The name *denarius* itself was adopted in Sanskrit as *dīnāra*. The popularity of the Roman coin motifs in the early centuries of the Christian era is demonstrated by the discovery of a considerably large number of clay *bullae* (ornamental amulets) and medallions at places like Kondapur, Chandravalli, Kolhapur, Rajghat, Sisupalgarh, Nagarjunikonda, etc.

To what extent the Roman traders settled down and made India their home is difficult to say, though the establishment of permanent agencies of Roman traders at important emporia is extremely likely. At Muziris (Cranganore, Kerala State) there is said to have existed a temple of Augustus. The Tamil Śaṅgam literature is full of references to the Yavana traders. The *Silappadikāram* speaks of the existence of the abodes of the Yavanas at Puhār or Kāverīpaṭṭinam at the mouth of the Kāverī, another leading port of the period.

THE SCYTHIANS AND THE PARTHIANS

The Scythians (known as Śakas in India), who brought an end to the Greek rule first in Bactria and ultimately in India, were originally a nomadic tribe of Central Asia. They were forced to migrate out of their habitat by the hostility of neighbouring tribes. Soon after their infiltration into India, the lower Indus valley came to be named as Scythia after them. Inscriptions and coins attest to the rule of a line of four Śaka rulers, viz. Maues, Azes I, Azilizes, and Azes II. The nationality of these rulers is often questioned, some claiming the last three as Parthian (Indian Pahlava). The Parthian traits may be due to the racial admixture which the Śakas certainly underwent during their long stay in eastern Iran before their penetration into India, with the result that the members of the same family bear Scythian, Parthian, and also Persian names. In truth, the political career of the Scythians in India is so much mixed up with that of the Parthians that it is not always possible to differentiate between them. The Śakas and Pahlavas are mentioned side by side in Indian literature and are regarded as degraded Kṣatriyas by Manu.

The rule of Azes II was supplanted in the first quarter of the first century A.D. by that of Gondophernes, unanimously acclaimed as Parthian. The Indo-Parthian supremacy was ephemeral, to be shattered by the more vigorous and extensive rule of the Kuṣāṇas, who, however, retained the services of the Śaka Satraps under their nominal allegiance.

The culture of the Śaka-Pahlavas being much inferior to those of the Greeks and the Indians, they succumbed to the cultural impact of both. They had very little heritage of their own to contribute to the highly advanced culture of the conquered, and they were better known as the champions of the Hellenistic art and ideas. But soon India began to influence her conquerors; they embraced her faiths. Indian deities like Śiva, Umā, and Gaja-Lakṣmī (Lakṣmī being bathed by elephants) made their appearance on their coins. The Śaiva creed of Gondophernes is demonstrable not only from his assumption of the title Devavrata but also from the representation of Śiva on some of his coins. Buddhism was in a prosperous condition during their regime. The Śaka provincial Satraps (Indianized into Kṣatrapa) in charge of remote provinces as viceroys did not behave differently. Patika, son of the Kṣatrapa Liaka Kusuluka of Cukhsa near Taxila, during the reign of Moha (Maues), enshrined the relics of the Buddha and built a monastery at Taxila. So did the chief queen of the Mahākṣatrapa Rajula of Mathurā, and she is associated in her pious acts with a host of Śaka individuals. The complete Indianization of Śaka Uṣavadāta (Ṛṣabhadatta), son-in-law of the Kṣaharāta Satrap Nahapāna (first quarter of the second century A.D.) of western India, is amply borne out not only by his Indian name but also by a number of inscriptions at Nasik and Karle recording his benefactions. The true spirit of a pious Hindu—exhibited by him was his pilgrimage to Indian *tīrthas* (holy places) and his offering of various kinds of gifts to the Brāhmaṇas and others. He also excavated caves for the Buddhist monks and made large endowments for the latter. Dakṣamitrā, his wife, followed her husband by making a gift of a cave dwelling for the use of the monks at Nasik.

The rule of Nahapāna was overthrown by the Sātavāhana king Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi. But almost immediately a new Scythian satrapal line, virtually independent, was established in western India. One is stuck by the quickness of the complete Indianization of this family, which was destined to have a long rule. The name of Caṣṭana, founder of the line, and that of his father Ysamotika are non-Indian. Jayadāman and Rudradāman, son and grandson of Caṣṭana, however, bear partly Indianized names. The name of Damaghsada, son and successor of Rudradāman, is again foreign, though the name of his brother Rudrasiṁha is purely Indian. The later members of the family, with occasional use of the ending *dāman*, continue to bear Indian names. The use of Kharoṣṭhī, Brāhmī, and Greek scripts on the coins of Caṣṭana was limited in the case of his successors to Brāhmī and Greek, the latter degenerating into an ornamental border. The extent of Indianization can easily be visualized from the Junagarh (Saurāṣṭra) inscription (A.D. 150) of Rudradāman,

recording the restoration of a dam under the supervision of his provincial governor Pahlava Suviśākha, where Rudradāman claims, not unjustifiably, mastery over Sanskrit composition, both in prose and poetry. It is noteworthy that while the inscriptions of the contemporary Sātavāhanas are in Prakrit, those of the Kṣatrapas are in Sanskrit. Rudradāman's own inscription is itself a landmark in the history of Sanskrit prose. He even married his daughter to Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Śātakarṇi of the orthodox Sātavāhana family. The matrimonial alliance of this family with the Ikāvākus of south-eastern India is also attested to by one of the Nagarjunikonda inscriptions, where Rudradhara Bhaṭṭārikā, queen of Vīrapuruṣadatta (third century A.D.) is said to have made a gift of a pillar in the Mahācaitya at Nagarjunikonda. Other inscriptions tell the same tale about private Śaka individuals. One of the Nasik cave inscriptions records gifts by a Śaka called Vudhika, son of Viṣṇudatta ; another, belonging to the reign of the Ābhīra Īśvarasena (third century), also records a perpetual endowment for providing medicine to the sick monks by the Upāsikā Viṣṇudattā, the daughter of the Śaka Agnivarman. Śaka Śrīdharavarman, son of Nanda, who was originally a *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, but later on assumed independence, was a devotee of Mahāsena. In his Kaṇakhera (Sanchi) inscription he calls himself *dharma-vijayī* (a religious conqueror). Like an orthodox Hindu, he aspires to attain eternal abode in heaven by doing pious works such as the digging of a well.

THE ABHIRAS

The origin of this nomadic tribe and the stages of their migration into India are obscure. Most probably they came to India shortly before, or along with, the Scythians. Patañjali (second century B.C.) couples them with the Śūdras, and the same grouping is found in the *Mahābhārata*,[18] where the two peoples are located near the spot of the disappearance of the Sarasvatī in southern Punjab or northern Rajasthan. The *Periplus* mentions Aberia with the coastal district Syrastrene (Saurāṣṭra), and Ptolemy locates Abiria above the Indus delta. Their western association is attested to in many Purāṇas as well.

In their early days in India, the Ābhīras led a nomadic and predatory life—an example of which is the story of their raid on Arjuna and the Yādava women escorted by him.[19] But by the second century we find some of them attaining high ranks and even seizing political power. The Gunda (Saurāṣṭra) inscription of A.D. 181 records the digging of a tank by an Ābhīra general Rudrabhūti, the son of a general named Bāpaka. One Ābhīra Īśvarasena, son of Śivadatta, supposed to be the founder of the Kalacuri-Cedi

[18] IX.

[19] *Mbh.*, XVI. 7 ; *Viṣṇu P.*, V. 38.

era beginning with A.D. 248-49, rose to the royal rank in northern Mahārāṣṭra. Towards the end of the third century the Ābhīras wielded considerable power, and along with other Śaka rulers of India, an Ābhīra king sent an embassy to congratulate the Sassanian king Narseh (293-302) on his victory against Varhran III. The Purāṇas also recognize the rule of ten Ābhīra princes covering a period of sixty-seven years after the Sātavāhanas. In the fourth century they came into conflict with the Kadamba king Mayūraśarman. The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta refers to the Ābhīras as paying homage to him. Stray references to the Ābhīras as a political power, particularly in western India, continue in mediaeval literature and inscriptions.

The Ābhīras were at first regarded as barbarians and were despised. The Purāṇas brand them as *mlecchas* and *dasyus* (robbers). According to the *Amarakoṣa*, Mahāśūdrī means Ābhīrī, while the *Kāśikā* identifies Mahāśūdra with a man of the Ābhīra descent. According to the *Mahābhārata*[20] they were Kṣatriyas degraded from their rank owing to the non-observance of Kṣatriya duties. The position of the Ābhīras was much improved in the estimation of Manu[21] who regards them as the offspring of a Brāhmaṇa by an Ambaṣṭha (descended from a Brāhmaṇa father and Vaiśya mother) woman. The Ābhīras made a strong impression upon the Indians. Their speech obtained a distinct place in the Indian drama as an Apabhraṁśa (low Prakrit) dialect. They also contributed to the development of Indian music. Almost all musical works recognize the *rāginī* (tune) Ābhīrī or Āhīrī. But their greatest contribution is towards the growth of pastoral legends centring round Kṛṣṇa including his love affair with the *gopīs* (milkmaids). Today we find the Āhīrs (descendants of Ābhīras) scattered over the greater part of India. A number of localities in India are named after this tribe.

THE KUṢĀṆAS

In the first century A.D., the Śaka-Pahlava power in the north-west gave way before the rising Kuṣāṇas, a branch of the Yueh-chi, a Central Asian nomadic tribe, which, in the second century B.C. under pressure from the neighbouring Hūṇas, left its habitat and overran Bactria, driving the Śakas to Kipin (modern Kafiristan). The Kuṣāṇa ruler, Kujula Kadphises, entered India at a fairly advanced age, but even so the absorbing forces of the Indian culture fully operated upon him, for he calls himself on some of his coins *dhramaṭhida (dharma-sthita)* and *sacadhramathida* (*satya-dharma-sthita*), meaning 'steadfast in the true religion' (Buddhism?). His son, Wema Kadphises, was an avowed Śaiva. The reverse device of his coins is almost invariably Śiva or his emblem, a combination of a trident and a battle-axe.

[20] XIV. 29. 16. [21] X. 15.

The Kuṣāṇa empire reached its zenith under Kaniṣka, who conquered the major part of northern India. In his outlook he was a full-fledged Indian and took active interest in the all-round development of the country—specially in the spheres of religion, literature, and art. Celebrated as a great patron of Buddhism, he attempted to systematize the contradictory views of the various schools, and with this object summoned the Fourth Buddhist Council, which marked the official recognition of the growing Mahāyānism, with far-reaching results in both religion and art. The huge *stūpa* which he built in the immediate vicinity of Peshawar, his capital, evoked great admiration even in later times from the Chinese and Arab travellers. From inside his *stūpa* has been recovered an inscribed relic casket, bearing the figure of the Buddha both on its body and lid and recording a gift in Kaniṣka's *vihāra* (monastery), probably in the first year of his reign. The inscription also preserves the name of the architect Agiśala, which is undoubtedly a Prakrit form of Agesilaos—an instance of Kuṣāṇa rulers' requisitioning the services of a Greek. His coins also bear the figure of the Buddha. Both the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra and the indigenous art of Mathurā, which witnessed the simultaneous appearance of the Buddha-image, owe much to the active patronage of this great ruler and his successors. The extra-Indian limits of their empire helped to a very great extent the spread of the Gandhāra art in Afghanistan and the neighbouring regions. Kaniṣka also extended his patronage to Buddhist philosophers and writers like Aśvaghoṣa, Pārśva, and Vasumitra. It is generally accepted that Kaniṣka was the founder of the Śaka era starting with A.D. 78, which came to be associated with the name of the Śakas due to its persistent use by the western Śaka Satraps.[22]

The successors of Kaniṣka continue to bear outlandish names. On the coins of Huviṣka are introduced some additional Indian deities, such as Bhaveśa (Śiva), Mahāsena, Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha, and Umā. A unique coin of this ruler probably presents one of the earliest representations of the composite deity Hari-Hara.[23] Indeed, cult-syncretism in India received a great impetus from the syncretic tendencies of the Scytho-Parthians and Kuṣāṇas, who were prone to pay equal homage to the deities of different creeds. The last important Kuṣāṇa king (c. A.D. 142-176) had a full-fledged Indian name, Vāsudeva, and was a devotee of Śiva, the latter appearing on most of his coins. The worship of this deity in his phallic form by devotees dressed like the Kuṣāṇas is represented by a few sculptures originating in

[22] The use of an era was popularized in India by the Scytho-Parthians and Kuṣāṇas who are also credited with the introduction of high-sounding royal titles like Rājādhirāja, Mahārājādhirāja, etc.

[23] J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta, 1956), pp 123 f.

Mathurā. The decline of the Kuṣāṇa power after Vāsudeva was hastened partly by the rise of the local dynasties on the south, and partly by the Sassanians of Persia on the north, who annexed the north-western part of the Kuṣāṇa empire. The Kuṣāṇa rulers were also responsible for the development of the ideology behind the divine nature and origin of kings, as shown not only by such characteristic features as flames issuing from their shoulders, the royal busts rising from the clouds, and the halo around their head, depicted on their coins, but also by their open assumption of the title Devaputra in their inscriptions.

THE HŪṆAS

The Hūṇas (Epthalites or White Huns) poured into India from the Oxus valley in the fifth century A.D., laying waste the Buddhist establishments in Gandhāra and sweeping away the declining Kidāra-Kuṣāṇas. The Gupta emperor Skandagupta (*c.* 455-67) succeeded for the time being in arresting their further incursions, but within the next few decades we find their chief Toramāṇa holding a substantial part of northern India, including at least a portion of the Madhya Pradesh. According to a Jaina tradition, he became a convert to that faith and lived at Pavvaiya on the Candrabhāgā. Toramāṇa's son and successor Mihirakula ruled over a large part of India, including Gwalior, up to his fifteenth regnal year. But soon afterwards he met with crushing reverses at the hands of the Central Indian ruler Yaśadharman and probably also of the Gupta ruler Bālāditya. According to the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, he repaired to Kashmir, where he founded a dynasty, the members of which were zealous adherents of Brāhmaṇism. That Mihirakula himself was an exclusive worshipper of Śiva is placed beyond all doubt by the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman. His coins also have on the reverse a bull and the legend *jayatu vṛṣaḥ* (Victory to Śiva!). The adoption of the Brāhmaṇical creeds by this turbulent people is admirably represented by a nicolo (onyx) seal depicting a Hūṇa chief standing in a worshipful attitude before a syncretistic figure of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Mihira.[24] Though the Hūṇa empire in India collapsed with the defeat of Mihirakula, small Hūṇa principalities and communities survived even afterwards, since they are mentioned in the inscriptions of the mediaeval ruling dynasties like Paramāras and Cāhamānas. But they soon lost their individuality amidst the natives of the soil and came to be regarded as one of the thirty-six Rajput clans. In the eleventh century, the great Cedi ruler Karṇa married a Hūṇa princess named Āvalladevī. The impact of this foreign people on the social structure of India is palpable from the fact that the ethnic name

[24] J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 124, pl. xi. 2.

survives even now as one of the caste surnames of Central India and the Punjab. The names of a large number of villages in these regions still preserve the memory of this people.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing brief survey will amply prove that, apart from the broad racial groups recognized by anthropologists as constituting the Indian population—most of such groups having entered India in prehistoric or protohistoric times, and one or two being autochthonous—there are a number of other racial elements in the population the contribution of which to the enrichment of Indian culture can in no way be ignored. Further, in addition to those peoples about whose migration there is recorded history or material evidence, there must have been many more unrecorded movements which also brought with them new racial and cultural features that ultimately went to make the cultural pattern of India more and more complex. The quick adoption of the Indian languages and faiths by the incoming peoples, due either to the compulsion of circumstances or to the comparative effeteness of the languages and creeds that they brought with them, hastened and completed the process of assimilation.

To refuse to take notice of the diverse and exotic elements in the Indian culture, and to regard it as wholly or even mainly the outcome of Vedism, or even of the more eclectic Purāṇism, is to falsify history. At the same time, to isolate these elements and to emphasize them unduly is to ignore the basic homogeneity of the Indian culture—the product of absorbing forces that were in operation since the very dawn of human history in India. As Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji says, 'The fundamental trait of this (*scil.* Indian) civilization may be described as a Harmony of Contrasts, or as a Synthesis creating a Unity out of Diversity. Perhaps more than any other system of civilization, it is broad and expansive and all-comprehensive, like life itself, and it has created an attitude of acceptance and understanding which will not confine itself to a single type of experience only, to the exclusion of all others..'[25]

[25] Presidential Address, All-India Oriental Conference, 17th Session, Ahmedabad (1953).

SOME EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL REFORM IN MEDIAEVAL INDIA

INDIAN society in the mediaeval ages[1] appears to have been more or less static. Its dominant feature was custom. Ancient institutions that had been devised after considerable thought, and that had stood the ravages of time, became stereotyped. Many evils crept into mediaeval society, and since leadership in the political field had passed into the hands of an alien race, no well-thought out attempt was made, till the reign of Akbar, to rejuvenate society by purging it of evil customs. But the problem was stupendous, and no reform that lacked the support of the entire population could bear fruit. Consequently, Akbar's well-meant attempt as well as the preachings of the saints of the Bhakti cult touched only the fringe of society; its even tenor continued undisturbed.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Of the many evil customs in mediaeval Indian society, none was perhaps more prevalent than child marriage, which was in vogue among the Hindus and the Muslims alike. Political and social circumstances compelled a father, at least among the Hindus,[2] to have his daughter married as early as possible. Custom forbade girls to remain in the house of their parents for more than six to eight years from birth. According to Mukundarāma, the author of the famous poem *Caṇḍī-maṅgala*, composed in the sixteenth century, a father who could give his daughter in marriage in her ninth year was considered 'lucky and worthy of the favours of God.[3] This custom had become so rigid and coercive that we find the general of a Peshwā, who could not arrange the marriage of his daughter at nine, writing back home from the battlefield in deep anxiety, 'If the marriage is postponed to the next year, the bride will be as old as ten. It will be a veritable calamity and scandal'.[4] These early marriages were no doubt in the nature of betrothals, since the actual consummation

[1] Some of the topics in this article have been elaborately treated in the writer's *Some Aspects of Society and Culture during the Mughal Age* (1526-1707), (Shivalal Agarwala & Co., Educational Publishers, Agra, 1956), which may be consulted for further details.

[2] Hindus, as a protection against Muslim raiders, who would not usually carry off married women, resorted to early marriage of their daughters. It also acted as a safeguard against vices, and helped the bride to know her husband early enough. Cf. Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942), pp. 489-90.

[3] J. N. Das Gupta, *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century* (Calcutta, 1914), p. 178

[4] A. S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Benares, 1938), p. 73.

took place much later, usually after the attainment of puberty;[5] but the fact remains that the evil was there; it had become universal and coercive, and no attempt was made to check it till the age of Akbar. The enlightened monarch that he was, this evil custom could not escape his vigilant eye. He issued orders that boys were not to marry before the age of sixteen and girls before fourteen. The Emperor was of opinion that the offsprings of such early marriages would be weaklings. He was also of opinion that the consent of the bride and the bridegroom, together with the permission of the parents, was essential for the confirmation of a marriage.[6] It was the duty of the *kotwāl* to verify and note down the ages of the couple before giving his consent to the marriage. The criticism of the bigoted Badāūnī that 'in this way corruption became rife . . . large profits found their way into the pockets of the police officers' might be partially true. But the imperial regulation was indeed a bold adventure, and it must have checked the evil, since Badāūnī himself admits that 'no son or daughter of a person (was allowed) to be married until their ages (were) investigated by the chief police officer'.[7] It is, however, to be regretted that this order was neither rigorously enforced nor renewed by the later emperors, and must have fallen into disuse.

INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

Inter-caste marriage was quite out of vogue in Hindu society,[8] and no attempt was made in the mediaeval times to reintroduce it. In fact, even a liberal ruler like Akbar was not in favour of it; the reason being, as Abul Fazl asserts, that he wished that his subjects should have the best progeny; and for that physically, mentally, and morally fit matches were necessary, since the children inherited the good or bad qualities of their parents.[9] The *Āīn-i-Akbari* may be referred to for details regarding caste restrictions. Careri and Thevenot have also dealt with this topic at some length.[10] No such restriction, however, existed among the Mohammedans. Barring some close relations, they had complete freedom in choosing the brides. Akbar, however, disliked this custom and thought it highly improper to get into matrimonial alliance with near relations. He allowed marriage

[5] *Travels in India in the Seventeenth Century*, by Sir Thomas Roe and John Fryer (Trubner & Co., London, 1873), p. 185. For detailed references to early marriages, see the work mentioned in f.n. 1., p. 111.

[6] Abul Fazl, *Āīn-i-Akbarī* (Eng. trans. by H. Blochmann, 1873), I. pp. 195, 203, 277; M. H. Azad, *Darbār-i-Akbarī* (Urdu, 1921), pp. 79-80.

[7] Abdul Qādir Badāūnī, *Muntkhab-ut-Tawārīkh* (Eng. trans. by G. S. A. Ranking and W. H. Lowe, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884), II. pp. 367, 404-6. Also see Abul Fazl, *Akbarnāmā* (Eng. trans. by H. Beveridge, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1904), III. p. 677.

[8] It was from the tenth century that inter-caste marriages began to go out of fashion. Cf Altekar. *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[9] *Akbarnāmā*, III. p. 677.

[10] S. N. Sen (Ed.), *Travels of Thevenot and Careri* (National Archives of India), p. 255.

between first cousins in special circumstances, when he regarded it as a 'slight evil for a great good'.

POLYGAMY

Polygamy, which seems to have been prevalent, particularly among the upper and middle-class Mohammedan families, soon attracted Akbar's attention. Hindus, with the exception of a small number of princes and very wealthy persons, strictly restricted themeelves to monogamy, as enjoined by their social custom, and such too was the case with the generality of the Mohammedans.[12] Almost all the travellers,—Alberuni, Della Valle, Mandelslo, Hamilton, Orme, and Stavorinus—who visited India during this period, corroborate the fact that 'Hindus take but one wife and never divorce her till death except for the cause of adultery'. They could marry a second time only if the first wife proved to be barren.[13] However, there was no such restriction among the Mohammedans, whose law ordains: 'Marry whatever woman you like, either three each, or four each.' Polygamy, naturally, brought many evils in its train. A single husband could hardly be expected to satisfy several wives, who wore the most expensive clothes, ate the daintiest food, and enjoyed all worldly pleasures. These co-wives used all devices to excel one another and thereby win the exclusive love of their husband. Domestic unhappiness and immorality, in some cases at least, was the natural consequence. No check whatsoever was put on this practice till the reign of Akbar, who consulted the *ulemā* participating in the religious discourses in his famous 'Ibādat-khānā' (House of Worship) at Fatehpur Sikri. In spite of the decision of the *ulemā* that a man might marry any number of wives by *mutāh*,[14] but only four by *nikāh*,[15] Akbar was bold enough to issue orders that a man of ordinary means should not possess more than one wife, unless the first proved to be barren. He considered it highly injurious to a man's health, and also detrimental to domestic peace, to keep more than one wife.[16]

YOUNG MEN MARRYING OLD WOMEN

Akbar tried to do away with the evil practice of a young man's marrying an old lady, a practice which was widely prevalent, particularly among the

[11] *Akbarnāmā*, III. p. 352. [12] Badāūnī, *op. cit.*, II. p. 367.

[13] Adam Olearius (Ed.), *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors Sent by Fredrick Duke of Holstein to the Great Duke of Muscow, etc., Containing a Particular Description of Hindustan, the Moguls, the Oriental Island and China (in Book III)* by Albert Mandelslo. (Second Edition, London, 1669), p. 52.

[14] A temporary Muslim marriage among *Shiās* (according to the Arab lexicographers "marriage of pleasure"), a marriage which is contracted for a fixed period on rewarding the woman.

[15] A marriage common to *Shiās* and *Sunnis*. Here marriage is a legal institution.

[16] Badāūnī, *op. cit.*, II. pp. 212, 367 ; Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Mohammedans. The Hindus followed Manu's injunction that a bridegroom should be older than his bride.[17] There was no such restriction in Mohammedan law. Quite often a young man, attracted by the wealth of an old lady, would marry her disregarding the abnormal difference in age. Akbar regarded such acts as against all canons of modesty, and issued orders declaring such marriages illegal. He further laid down that if a woman happened to be older than her husband by twelve years, the marriage should be considered illegal and annulled.[18] It is to be regretted, however, that neither society nor any statutory law prevented an old man from marrying a girl of tender years.

DOWRY SYSTEM

Akbar was perhaps the only mediaeval ruler who raised his voice against high dowries, which were prevalent in those days. Several European travellers have referred to this custom, which was harsh to the poor who found it difficult to give their daughters in marriage because of their inability to pay high dowries.[19] Sometimes a poor father had not the means to procure even a wedding outfit for his daughter. Tukārām, the greatest of Mahārāṣṭra saints, could give his daughter in marriage only through the contributions of the villagers. Vallabhācārya was hesitant to let his daughter be engaged to Śrī Caitanya, since he was too poor to pay a handsome dowry.[20] Huge dowries have been referred to in the works of the period, such as *Sursāgar*, *Rāmcaritmānas*, and *Padmāvat*. Akbar was no doubt against high dowries and disapproved of them, since, as Abul Fazl writes, 'they are rarely ever paid; they are mere sham'; but he admitted their utility also as a preventive measure against rash divorces. The *Āīn-i-Akbarī* records that the two sensible men called *tui-begs*, or masters of marriages, appointed by the Emperor, also looked into the circumstances of the bride and the bridegroom.

The evil of bridal price was wide-spread in the South, particularly among the Brāhmaṇas of the Paḍaivīḍu kingdom in mediaeval times. The custom became so coercive that Deva Rāya II of Vijayanagara, who ruled in A.D. 1422-49, in consultation with the Brāhmaṇas of all shades of opinion in that division, had to enact a legislation by which all marriages among these Brāhmaṇas were henceforth to be concluded by *kanyā-dāna*, and the

[17] G. Bühler, *The Laws of Manu* (The Sacred Books of the East, XXV. Oxford, 1886), p. 344; cf. *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, I. 52.
[18] *Āīn*, (Eng. trans. by H. S. Jarrett, 1894), III. p. 311.
[19] S. N. Sen (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 248); Mandelslo, *op. cit.*, p. 62; *Akbarnāmā*, III. pp. 677-78; M. A. Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford, 1927), I. pp. 145, 353-54; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Bombay), III. p. 15.
[20] Nishikanta Sanyal, *Sree Krishna Chaitanya* (Madras, 1933), I. p. 366.

father had to give the daughter to the bridegroom gratuitously. Both the father who received the money and the bridegroom who gave the money were to be excommunicated. Money transactions on the occasion of a marriage were declared to be a legal offence.[21]

As in the case of bridal price, so in respect of some *maryāda* (respectful offering), the people inhabiting the lands from Koṇḍapalli to Rājamahendrapuram decided that the *oli*[22] *maryāda* in a first marriage should be twenty-one *cinnams* (a type of coin) of gold; that the bridegroom's party should give twelve and a half *cinnams* of silver and the bride's party twenty and a half *cinnams* of gold.

WIDOW REMARRIAGE

Widow remarriage, except for the lower caste people, had disappeared almost completely in Hindu society during the early mediaeval age. No efforts were made to reintroduce this custom by any of the mediaeval rulers. Akbar, too, did not think it advisable to enforce widow remarriage, though he declared it to be lawful.[23] He was of opinion that a young girl who had 'got no enjoyment from her husband should not be burnt, but if the Hindus took it ill, she should be married to a widower'.

PURDAH

No efforts were made in the mediaeval times to reform, much less to abolish, the *purdāh* system, which was strictly observed in high class families of both the communities. Even a liberal king like Akbar had issued orders that 'if a young woman was found running about the streets and bazars of the town and, while so doing, did not veil herself or allowed herself to become unveiled, . . . she was to go to the quarters of the prostitutes and take up the profession'.[24] It is, however, to the credit of the saints of the Bhakti movement that they raised their voice against the tyranny of the *purdāh*. Pīpā (A.D. 1425), a saint of Gagaraungarh, advised the queen of Toda, the wife of Sūr Sen, that it was not necessary for women to veil themselves in the presence of holy men, while Kabīr remonstrated against the observance of *purdāh* by his daughter-in-law, saying that it would not be of any avail at the last moment.

[21] S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, *Social Legislation under Hindu Governments* (Madras, 1915), pp 5-6; T. V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagara* (Madras, 1940), pp. 256-57.

[22] *Oli* is the same as bridal price. This term is generally used with reference to the lower classes. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

[23] *Āin i Akbarī* (Trans. by H. Blochmann and revised by D. C. Phillott. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1939), p. 215. Also see Badāūnī, *op. cit.*, II. p. 367.

[24] Chopra, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-8.

[25] This is said to have been an importation into India, *Vide* Will Durant, *op. cit.*, pp. 494-96.

SATI

Some of the Delhi Sultans did try to discourage the custom of *sati* (suttee),[25] which prevailed among a large section of the Hindu population, particularly the upper classes and the Rajputs. Though *satī* was only voluntary in the South and not enjoined upon the widows, it is difficult to account for its wide popularity in the Vijayanagara empire, whose rulers, however, do not seem to have put any restrictions on its observance.[26] Mohammed-bin Tughluq was, in all probability, the first mediaeval ruler who placed restrictions on its observance.[27] A licence had to be obtained before a widow could immolate herself within his dominions. The law was meant to prevent any compulson or force being used against an unwilling widow. These rules seemed to have continued, as Sīdī 'Alī Reīs, who visited India during Humāyūn's reign, observes that the officers of the Sultan were always present on the scene of *satī* observance, and looked to it that the widow was not being burnt against her will.[28]

Though Akbar did not forbid the *satī* altogether, he had issued definite orders to the *kotwāls* that they 'should not suffer a woman to be burnt against her inclination'. Dīn-i-Ilāhī, Akbar's new faith, also condemned this practice.[29] Sometimes, he is said to have personally intervened to save unwilling widows from the practice of *satī*. Not only did he rescue the widow of Jai Mal, a cousin of Bhagwān Dās, from being burnt, but also put in prison her son, who had compelled her to burn herself. The European travellers—Della Valle, Pelsaert, and Tavernier—testify to the fact that the permission of the governor was absolutely essential before a widow could be allowed to be burnt. The governor, according to Pelsaert, tried to dissuade her from the act and even offered her monthly subsistence.[30] Sometimes the permission was refused even to willing widows who had children to rear.[31] The permission was usually obtained after giving a suitable present. Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān did not make any change in the existing law. The former, when he came to know that in the foothills of the Himalayas Muslim converts had retained the Hindu custom of *satī* and female infanticide, made these a capital offence. Shāh Jahān would not allow the burning of widows near a Muslim cemetery, since it looked offensive to Mohammedans. Aurangzeb was the only emperor who issued definite orders (1664) forbidding *satī* in his realms altogether,[32] but his orders seem to have

[26] Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-61.

[27] Ishwari Prasad, *History of Qāraunāh Turks in India*, I. p. 304.

[28] *Travels and Adventures of Sīdī 'Alī Reīs during the years 1553-56*, p. 60.

[29] M. Roy Choudhury, *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*, p. 261.

[30] *Jahangīr's India (The Remonstrantie of)* Francois Pelsaert ; trans. from the Dutch by W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 79-80.

[31] *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier through Turkey into Persia and the East Indies* (London, 1678), I. p. 169.

[32] J. N. Sarkar, *Aurangzib*, V. pp. 461-62.

had no appreciable effect on the populace, who continued to follow the custom as before.

USE OF INTOXICANTS

Intoxicants like wine, opium, and *bhāṅg* were frequently indulged in. In spite of the injunctions of the Qur'an, which strictly forbade the use of wine, drinking was quite popular among Mohammedans, particularly the upper classes and the soldiery, who were very fond of it. Ladies, teachers, and religious preachers, too, sometimes resorted to it in secret, but such instances were few. It was the nobility, however, which indulged in it indiscreetly, with the result that many of them fell victims to it. In the South, however, the Vijayanagara rulers strictly forbade the use of wine, which was looked upon as a great sin. But no effort seems to have been made to put a check on drinking in the North before the time of 'Alā-ud-dīn Khaljī, whose reforms were also an 'outcome of political exigencies and not of any philanthropic motives'. His main objection against wine was that 'its use made people assemble in gatherings, lose themselves, and think of revolt'.[33] He issued orders strictly forbidding the sale and purchase of wine. Later on, intoxicants like toddy and hemp, too, were prohibited.

The Emperor adopted ruthless measures to enforce prohibition. Vintners, drunkards, gamblers, and vendors of toddy and hemp were driven out of the capital. His intelligence department kept a strict watch over the offenders, who were severely punished and sometimes thrown into wells specially dug for the purpose. The respectable people at once gave up drinking, but habitual drunkards resorted to manufacture of wine in private and to smuggling. Later on, the Sultan relaxed his orders to some extent and allowed private distillation and drinking.[34] The prohibition order was neither renewed nor strictly enforced by the later emperors till the reign of Akbar, who ordered severe punishment for excessive drinking and disorderly conduct. Even Muzaffar Husain Mīrzā, who had been married to Akbar's eldest daughter, was imprisoned for excessive drinking. Akbar also regularized the sale of wine. A wine shop was set up near the palace, where the liquid was sold in small quantities to be used as medicine on the advice of the physician, after fully ascertaining and writing down in a register the names of the customer, his father, and his grandfather.[35] Though Jahāngīr regarded a little wine 'a prudent friend', yet he discouraged its use among his subjects. He found it bad for the temperament, and strictly forbade all sorts of intoxicants, which 'must neither be made nor sold'.

[33] K. S. Lal, *History of the Khaljīs*, pp. 262-63.
[34] Ziā-ud-Dīn Barnī, *Tarīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī* (Bibliotheca Indica Calcutta, ASB, 1862), pp. 270-71.
[35] Badāūnī, *op. cit.*, II, p. 311.

Petermundy, who visited India during Shāh Jahān's reign, found the country dry. 'Death to the party, destruction to that house where it shall be found' was the order of the day. Of course, Aurangzeb, who 'drank nothing but water', could not tolerate wine. In 1668, he issued orders strictly prohibiting the use of all intoxicating liquors. European travellers of the time confirm the strictness of the measures adopted to enforce prohibition. *Muhtasibs* (municipal officers) were on the look-out for offenders, and Manucci records: 'The pots and pans in which the beverage was prepared were broken daily by *muhtasibs*.'[36] In spite of all this strictness, however, Auraṅgzeb failed to 'keep the Mughal aristocracy back from drink'. Jadunath Sarkar notices in the news letters of the court 'many reports of wine selling and wine drinking in the camp bazar, in the houses of his nobles, and among the garrisons of the forts'.[37] There is, however, no denying the fact that these prohibitory orders had a very healthy effect on the generality of the population, who kept themselves back from this evil. While acknowledging the occasional excesses of certain individuals here and there, we may accept the verdict of Terry as to the general sobriety of all ranks of the population except the nobles, who formed only a small section of it.[38]

SMOKING TOBACCO AND OTHER NARCOTICS

Tobacco[39] gained such rapid popularity soon after its introduction in India in 1605 by the Portuguese that Jahāngīr had to order its prohibition by a special enactment in 1617, on account of the disturbance 'it brings about in most temperaments and constitutions'. But the decree seemed to have remained a dead letter, as we learn from the accounts of later travellers. Manucci, for instance, mentions Rs. 5,000 as tobacco duty realized for a day in Delhi alone. The abolition of the Act, according to him, came as a great relief to the poorer classes. Jahāngīr also prohibited the use of *bhāṅg* and *buzā*, declaring that they were injurious to health.

GAMBLING

Efforts were also made by some of the mediaeval rulers like 'Alā-ud-dīn and Akbar to discourage gambling and dicing, which seem to have been quite common in those days. Amīr Khusrau describes a Muslim gambler as a familiar figure in society. 'Alā-ud-dīn prohibited it altogether and

[36] Niccolao Venetian Manucci, *Storia do Mogor* (Eng. trans. by William Irvine, 1907-8), II. pp 5-7.

[37] J N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, V. p. 461.

[38] William Foster, *Early Travels in India* (Oxford, 1921), p. 317; Manucci, *op. cit.*, IV. p. 208.

[39] *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī* (trans by Rogers and edited by H. Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London), I. p. 374; Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

ordered the gamblers to be turned out of the capital.[40] Kabīr looked upon gambling as nothing less than a sin. He advises his followers to refrain from it, as it is the 'cause of great sorrow and gamblers come to a very evil condition'. However, this evil seems to have continued, and no notice was taken of it till the time of Akbar, who put restrictions on gambling, so that it could be indulged in only on certain occasions, such as the festivals of *nauroz* and the *divāli*.[41] Jahāngīr forbade it altogether,[42] but the practice seems to have continued, and Thevenot, who visited India during Shāh Jahān's reign, observes that 'much gambling took plaace in Delhi and Banaras, and a vast deal of money was lost and people ruined'. He quotes the instance of a *baniyā* who lost all his wealth and staked even his wife and child.

PROSTITUTION

'Alā-ud-dīn was the first mediaeval Indian ruler to take steps against public prostitution, which was looked upon as a necessary evil during that age. The Sultan, who was alarmed at the rapid increase of the number of prostitutes during his reign, issued orders prohibiting prostitution altogether.[43] All the professional women were ordered to get married within a prescribed period of time. The evil, however, continued, since no check was put on it by that Sultan's successors till the reign of Akbar, who tried to segregate it. In order to keep the city atmosphere uncontaminated, a special quarter outside the city called *śaitānpura*, or the devil's quarters, was assigned to the prostitutes, and all the public women were ordered to reside there. A *dārogā* (police officer) was appointed to look after the affairs of the quarter. Everyone who wanted to visit a public woman had to get his particulars noted down in the *dārogā's* office and also pay the State fee. Special permission of the Emperor was necessary if any courtier wanted to have a virgin. The offenders were severely dealt with. Akbar himself inquired into the cases of some of the principal prostitutes, and punished those grandees who were responsible for depriving them of their virginity.[44] These measures must have put a good deal of check on the new entrants at least. Akbar's regulations seem to have continued to be observed during the reigns of the successive emperors, and Tavernier notes that it was essential for a woman to have licence from the government before she could adopt this profession. He also refers to the *dārogā's* book, which, according to him, contained 20,000 such names,[45] which seems to be an exaggeration.

[40] K. S. Lal, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-63.
[41] Badāūnī, *op. cit.*, II. pp. 348-49; also see *Āīn* (Trans. by Jarrett, 1891), II. p. 190.
[42] *Cambridge History of India*, IV. 181.
[43] Barnī, *op. cit.*, p. 336.
[44] *Āīn*, I. pp. 201-2.
[45] *The Six Voyages of Tavernier*, p. 65.

EUNUCHS

Jahāngīr tried to do away with the horrid practice of making and selling eunuchs, which was specially prevalent in Sylhet, in East Bengal. He issued orders making it a capital offence. Soon after, Afzal Khān, Governor of Bihar, sent a number of offenders to the capital. Jahāngīr sentenced them all to lifelong imprisonment.[46] But the practice seems to have continued, as Aurangzeb felt the necessity of renewing the regulation, strictly forbidding castration.[47] Both these emperors, however, continued to employ eunuchs in their own service.

SOCIAL REFORMERS

The efforts at reform, however, were not confined to the kings and emperors in the North. Perhaps more lasting and far-reaching were the socio-religious reforms of the saints of the Bhakti cult like Rāmānuja, Madhva, Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Ravidās, Nānak, Tukārām, Purandara Dāsa, Śrī Caitanya, Śaṅkara Deva, and Dādū, who flourished during this period and covered the whole country. They raised their powerful voice against the vices prevailing in society, and made it incumbent on their followers to desist from them. Their highly enlightened moral teachings, their prohibition of the heinous crime of infanticide, their injunctions against the practice of *satī*, and their powerful attacks on the caste system went a long way in bringing home to the masses the evil effects of some of these long-prevailing customs. Ranade summarizes the effects of the Bhakti movement on the life of the people in Mahārāṣṭra, and his account is true of other parts of the country as well. The main results of this movement, according to him, were 'the development of the vernacular literature, the modification of caste exclusiveness, the sanctification of family life, the elevation of the status of women, the spread of humaneness and toleration, partial reconciliation with Islam, the subordination of rites and ceremonies, pilgrimages and fasts, and learning and contemplation to the worship of God with love and faith, the limitation of the excesses of polytheism, and the uplift of the nation to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action'.[48]

The caste system was a special target of attack for these social reformers, particularly Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Tukārām, Śrī Caitanya, and Dādū, who have declared caste distinctions of the Hindus to be vain and 'productive of that pride which God abhors'.[49] Guru Nānak described

[46] Beni Prasad, *History of Jahāngīr* (London, 1930), pp. 436-37.
[47] J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, III. pp. 90-91.
[48] M. G. Ranade, *Rise of Marāṭhā Power*, pp. 50-51.
[49] Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, I. pp. xxii, 28, 278, 283; VI. pp. 103, 121, 319. Also see Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1946), pp. 122, 225.

caste rules to be a 'folly', while Rāmānanda applied himself to the study of the Śāstras to prove that the observance of caste rules was unnecessary for anyone who sought the service of God. Like Basava (A.D. 1156-67), founder of the reformed Vīraśaiva faith of Liṅgāyatas or Jaṅgamas, he laid it down as a rule that all persons of any caste who accepted the tenets and principles of his sect might eat and drink together irrespective of caste. Ravidās and Dādū condemned caste distinctions in unequivocal terms, while Śrī Caitanya went a step further and said that if a man ate from the plate of a Dom, he regarded it as most pleasing to God.[50] The main contention of these reformers, as Nāmdev, a saint of Mahārāṣṭra, puts it, was that 'even a low caste man who loves God is superior to a Brāhmaṇa who, though irreproachable in his acts, possesses no love for creatures'.[51] Rāmānuja was perhaps the first social reformer to relax caste restrictions in favour of the Sūdras in the South. How these moralists and poets of the mediaeval times fought against the rigidity of the caste-system and untouchability is related by Telugu and Karṇāṭaka poets like Sarvajña, Kanaka Dāsa, Kapilar, and Vemana in their compositions.[52] It was mainly the preachings of these reformers that brought about some relaxation in caste rules and indifference to rituals, at least among some sects in the South. We find, for instance, a Coḷa monarch granting the privileges of blowing conches, beating drums, etc. to the stone masons (Kan Malār) of Sonte Kongn and some other areas.[53] An inscription (A.D. 1632) of the reign of Śrīraṅga Deva, a Vijayanagara king, refers to an undertaking by the inhabitants of the village Tiruvamattūr in South Arcot not to ill-treat the artisan communtiies of their villages and in default to pay a certain fine.[54]

These spiritual teachers also made a fierce attack on some religious customs of both the communities; such as the worship of cemeteries and cremation grounds, pilgrimages, fasts, circumcision, the sacred thread ceremony (*upanayana*), etc.,[55] and advised their followers to refrain from these customs and develop in their place love of God and His creatures.

Guru Nānak and Kabīr deprecated the practice of *satī*. Nānak, in his hymns, disapproves of this custom, since in his opinion the widow 'who followeth her husband and dieth hath no pure love'. The Gurus contended that the concremation of widows was useless and did not serve any purpose.

[50] Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Chaitanya and His Companions*, pp. 160-61.
[51] Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, VI. p. 31.
[52] B. A. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire* (Madras, 1934), II. p. 58.
[53] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Coḷas* (Madras University, 1934), II. p. 357.
[54] Saletore, *op. cit.*, II. p. 202.
[55] Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, I. pp. 16, 17, 50; II. p. 50, 84, 240, 420; IV. pp. 293, 420; VI. pp. 126, 127.

'If the widow loves her husband, his death is a torture to her, and if she loves him not, his life or death is of unconcern to her. Therefore cremating her by force, or for the sake of custom or fashion, is uttterly useless.'[56] Kabīr discouraged the practice by pointing out the futility of the universal belief that the woman who immolated herself on her husband's pyre would obtain salvation. Guru Nānak also, in his hymns, disapproved of the practice of self-immolation of Hindu devotees at Banaras and Prayag.

It was due to the preachings and efforts of the Vaiṣṇava reformers, like Rāmānuja, Madhva, Śrī Caitanya, Vallabha, and others in later times, who placed absolute emphasis on the self-sufficiency of the path of devotion, that the last vestiges of bloodshed connected with human or animal sacrifices were practically done away with. Madhva could not, of course, enjoin their complete abolition, which is indeed impossible for anyone who bases his teachings on the authority of the Śrutis, but he substituted a lamb made of rice flour for one of flesh and blood as a sacrificial offering to the gods.[57]

The Sikh Gurus resolutely set themselves against the practice of infanticide. It was one of the obligations imposed on neophytes, at the time of their admission to the *pahūl* or Sikh baptism, that they should not kill their daughters and should avoid association with all those who did so.[58] The Gurus also tried to elevate the position of women and remonstrated with those who reviled the female sex:

'Why call her bad from whom are born kings?'

As was but natural, some of these social reformers, particularly Kabīr, Ravidās, Bīrbhān, Kartā Bābā, and the Sikh Gurus, discouraged the use of intoxicants like wine, tobacco, and toddy. While Kabīr and Ravidās outlined the evil effects of wine, the Sikh Gurus prohibited its use among their followers. Guru Hargovind Siṅgh, the sixth Guru, has advised his followers to desist from this evil, since 'he who drinketh it, loses his senses. Many kings have lost their kingdoms because of its use. It makes man a beast'. And the Guru has concluded with these words: 'Men, holy, clever, and great, have degraded themselves to the level of brutes by the use of wine. It will hold men captive even without fetters.' Kabīr also spoke in the same strain when offered a cup of wine by a *yogī*. The Sātnāmī sect was prohibited by its founder Bīrbhān from taking any intoxicating substance, such as wine, opium, tobacco, or even betel. The Sikh Gurus were particularly opposed to smoking. Guru Govind Siṅgh, the tenth Guru, prohibited smoking of tobacco by the Sikhs. He called it a vile

[56] *Ibid.*, II. p. 228.
[57] *Three Great Acharyas: Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva* (G. A. Nastesan & Co., Madras), p. 230.
[58] Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, III. p. 71, f.n. 2.

drug which 'burned the chest, induced nervousness, palpitation, bronchitis, and other diseases, and finally caused death'. He compared it with other intoxicants and concluded: 'Wine is bad, *bhāṅg* destroyeth one generation, but tobacco destroyeth all generations.' The violation of this prohibition order meant excommunication from the Khalsā, and the offender had to be rebaptized after due repentance and payment of a suitable fine.[59] Ravidās regarded the use of toddy as sinful.

Adultery, sodomy, and other such immoral practices were condemned on all hands. The Sikh Gurus as well as other social reformers looked upon the first as a most heinous crime. 'Approach not another woman's couch either by mistake or even in a dream. Know that love of another's wife is as sharp as a dagger.'[60]

'Alā-ud-dīn had issued orders according to which the adulteress was stoned to death, and the aulterer was castrated. Sometimes the guilty were deprived of their noses. These vices were, however, very rare in Indian society, and Tavernier observes, 'Adultery is very rare among them, and as for sodomy, I never heard it mentioned'. Akbar, too, held a high opinion of the chastity of Hindu women, who, in spite of being sometimes neglected, were 'flaming torches of love and fellowship'.[61] Jahāngīr admires the fidelity of Hindu women, who would not allow 'the hand of any unlawful person touch the skirt of their chastity, and would rather perish in flames'.[62]

[59] *Ibid.*, V. p. 153.
[60] *Ibid.*, V. 110.
[61] *Akbarnāmā*, III. p. 372.
[62] *Tūzūk-i-Jahāngīrī*, II. p. 268; Chopra, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27.

41

ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION[1]

I

THE VEDIC PERIOD

THE roots of the ancient Indian system of education may be traced in the works of Vedic literature, namely, the Vedic Saṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads. In fact these works are the products of the educational system which they reveal.

The main aim of this system is the training of the mind as an instrument of knowledge, and not simply to fill it with the furniture of objective knowledge. What weakens the mind is its contact with matter; what strengthens it is its detachment from matter and freedom from its contaminating contacts. In a word, the only way by which the mind can fulfil its innate and intrinsic potentialities is to kep itself in constant communion with the cosmic principle and open itself to its influence. It is what may be called *yoga* or the process of bringing together the individual soul and the Oversoul. The individual is the *ādhāra* (base) which is vitalized by the cosmic energy (*prakṛti*, *māyā*, or *śakti*) pervading the world and pouring itself into every name and form, the clod, the plant, the insect, the animal, or man. When the *ādhāra* is fully fitted to bear the inrush and impact of this divine energy, its evolution is completed, and the man becomes *siddha*, 'the fulfilled or perfected soul'.

Thus the first principle of this education was to bring into play the cosmic principle upon the individual by building up in the latter a strong store of infinite energy or divine potency through the practice of *brahmacarya* (chastity), the first necessary condition for increasing the vital force within and giving scope to its working.

Let us next proceed to analyse some salient features of the old Indian educational system. First of all, ancient schools were largely located far away from the din and bustle of cities in sylvan retreats, in an atmosphere of solitude and serenity conducive to mental concentration as the main appliance in education. From these sylvan schools and hermitages flowed

[1] On the subject of Indian education the following works may be consulted: *Promotion of Learning in Ancient India* by Narendra Nath Law; *Ancient Indian Education (Brāhmanical and Buddhist)* by Radha Kumud Mookerji (1947); *Education in Ancient India* (5th Ed.) by A. S. Altekar; and above all, *History of Dharmaśāstra* by P. V. Kane, Vol. II, pp. 268-415. For a survey of the whole subject during successive periods, *vide* also the chapters on education by Radha Kumud Mookerji in Vol. II and by the present writer in Vols. III-V of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*.

the highest thought of India. Thus India's civilization through the ages has been very largely the product of her woods and forests. It started as a rural and not as an urban civilization.[2] A significant designation of a branch of Sanskrit sacred literature is the Āraṇyaka, 'the literature of the woods', in the silence and solitude of which its meaning was revealed.

Apart from the influence of the environment, the real creative force in education came from the teacher (*guru*) as the master mind directing its entire course. His home was the school. The school was thus a natural formation and not an artificially created institution. It began where the pupil met the teacher and was admitted by him to his pupilage. The pupil was not forced upon him by the fee by which a modern school admits its pupils. The teacher's admission of the pupil was a solemn and sacred ceremony known as *upanayana* or initiation. It was not a mere meaningless ritual. The ceremony took three days, during which, as explained in the *Atharva-Veda,* the teacher held the pupil within him to impart to him a new birth, whence the pupil emerged as a *dvija* or twice-born. His first birth he owes to his parents, who gave him only his body; this is a mere physical birth. His second birth is spiritual; it unfolds his mind and soul.[3] Education was thus based upon an individual treatment of the pupil by his teacher, with whom he must live to give full scope to it. The pupil was to imbibe the inward method of the teacher, the secrets of his efficiency, the spirit of his life and work, and these things were too subtle to be taught. This individual treatment was all the more essential where the supreme purpose of education was the attainment of the highest, saving knowledge leading to *mukti* (liberation). The highest knowledge is described as *vidyā* or *parāvidyā*, as distinguished from *avidyā* or *aparāvidyā*, which is a body of contingent truths, half-truths, and fallacies.[4]

[2] As the poet Rabindranath Tagore writes in his inimitable style: 'A most wonderful thing we notice in India is that here the forest, not the town, is the fountain-head of all its civilization. Wherever in India its earliest and most wonderful manifestations are noticed, we find that men have not come into such close contact as to be rolled or fused into a compact mass. There, trees and plants, rivers and lakes, had ample opportunity to live in close relationship with men. In these forests, though there was human society, there was enough of open space, of aloofness; there was no jostling. Still this aloofness did not produce inertia in the Indian mind, rather it rendered it all the brighter. It is the forest that has nurtured the two great ancient ages of India, the Vedic and the Buddhist. As did the Vedic *ṛsis*. Lord Buddha also showed his teachings in the many woods of India. The current of civilization that flowed from its forests inundated the whole of India.' (Quoted in *Ancient Indian Education* (by R. K. Mookerji), p. xxxv.

[3] The supreme need of a teacher is thus explained in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 14 1-2): 'Precisely, my dear sir, as a man who has been brought blindfold from the country of Gandhāra and then set at liberty in the desert, goes astray to the east or north or south, because he has been brought thither blindfold and set at liberty also blindfold; but, after that, when someone has taken off the bandage and told him, "In this direction Gandhāra lies, go in this direction", instructed and prudent, asking the road from village to village, he finds his way home to Gandhāra; even so the man who in this world has met with a teacher becomes conscious, "To this (transitory world) I shall belong only until the time of my release, thereupon I shall go home".'

[4] This distinction between grades of knowledge is very well described in the *Chāndogya*

Three steps are distinguished in the attainment of supreme knowledge. These are *śravaṇa, manana,* and *nididhyāsana. Śravaṇa* is listening to the words or texts as they are uttered by the teacher. This was the time-honoured method of education in ancient India, the system of oral tradition, by which knowledge was transmitted from teacher to pupil by *guruparamparā* (a succession of teachers) or *sampradāya* (handing down). Such knowledge was imparted in the form known as *mantra* or *sūtra,* by which the maximum of meaning was compressed within the minimum of words, of which the crowning example was the *praṇava* or the syllable *Om* containing within itself a world of meaning. All the learning of the times was thus held between the teacher and the taught, and the teacher was the walking library and source of knowledge to be tapped directly by the student. Besides, recitation of texts as they were uttered by the teacher had its own value as a vehicle of knowledge. *Śabda* or sound of the sacred word or *mantra* has its own potency and value apart from its sense, and its intrinsic and innate implications, its rhythm, its vibrations, should be captured. *Śabda* is Brahman, 'the Word is God'.[5] The receiving of this knowledge as it was uttered by the teacher was to be followed by the process of its assimilation by *manana,* deliberation or reflection on the topic taught. But such reflection resulted only in a mere intellectual apprehension of the meaning of the text imparted by the teacher to his pupil. Therefore learning was to be completed by the third step or process—which was technically called *nididhyāsana* (meditation), leading to the realization of truth after its intellectual apprehension. As the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. 3-4) points out: A mere intellectual apprehension of truth, a reasoned conviction, is not sufficient, though it is necessary at the first stage as a sort of mark at which to shoot. *Nididhyāsana* represents the highest stage of meditation, which, with reference to Brahman or the one Reality, has been defined as 'the steady stream of consciousness of the one Reality, undisturbed by the slightest awareness of the many, of any material object such as the body, contradictory to the sense of the one, non-dual Self or Reality'.[6] The Upaniṣads prescribe certain preliminary exercises in medi-

Upaniṣad (VII 1), where the Sage Nārada approaches Sanatkumāra after completing his period of studentship, during which he studied the four Vedas, the Vedāṅgas, and many practical subjects known in those days. Nārada says to Sanatkumāra: 'These subjects, sir, I have studied. Therefore I am learned in the scriptures (*mantravid*), but not as regards the Ātman (*Ātmavid*). Yet I have heard from personages like you that he who knows the Ātman vanquishes sorrow. I am in sorrow. Lead me then, I pray, beyond the reach of sorrow.

[5] Śaṅkara in his *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* (Anc. Ind. Edu., p. xxxi) further explains *śravaṇa* as listening to the instruction of the teacher and knowing from him the primary truth that the Self is to be differentiated from non-Self appearing in various forms. Bondage is moved by knowledge. The knowledge that is thus received through the ear was aptly called *śruti,* 'what has been heard'. It was a term for revealed knowledge.

[6] *Vijātīya-dehādi-pratyaya-virahito 'dvitīya-vastu-sajātīya-pravāhaḥ* (*Sarva-Vedānta-Siddhānta-Sāra-Saṁgraha,* V. 814).

tation to lead up to its final stage. These are called *upāsanās*, giving training in contemplation.[7]

A set of external aids to knowledge was also formulated to supplement these inner disciplines and processes and to strengthen the moral foundations for the pursuit of knowledge. The first of these has already been stated, viz. that the pupil must live with his teacher as a member of his family, so that his education may be a whole-time process and not for a stated period, as is the custom in modern schools. Living with his teacher as his *antevāsin* (companion), the pupil had to take advantage of the opportunities which opened out before him in such a school, a hermitage set in sylvan surroundings. His first duty was to walk to the woods, collect fuel, and bring it home for tending the sacred fire. The Upaniṣads frequently mention pupils approaching their teacher with fuel in hand, as a token that they are ready to serve the teacher and tend his household fire. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[8] explains that the *brahmacārin* 'puts on fuel to enkindle the mind with fire, with holy lustre'.

The pupil's next duty was to tend the teacher's house and cattle. Tending the house was training for him in self-help, in dignity of labour, by manual service for his teacher and the student brotherhood. Tending cattle was education through a craft as a part of the highest liberal education. The pupils received a valuable training in the love of the cow as the animal most serviceable to man, and in the industry of rearing cattle and dairy-farming, with all the other advantages it gave of outdoor life and robust physical exercise.[9]

Another duty of the *brahmacārin* was to go out on a daily round of begging. It was not the selfish begging for his own benefit, but for the academic corporation to which he belonged. Its educative value is explained in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[10] which points out that it is meant to produce in the pupil a spirit of humility and renunciation.

Thus all these external practices operate as aids to knowledge by

[7] In the story of Nārada (*Chā. U.*, VII. 1) quoted above, Sanatkumāra answered him: 'Whatever you have studied (including even the Vedas) is mere words.' Similarly, Śvetaketu, spending twelve years in a thorough study of all the Vedas, is found by his father Uddālaka Āruṇi only 'full of conceit about his erudition, without that knowledge through which everything is known'. (*Ibid.* VI. 1). Upakosala Kāmalāyana was another student who even with his twelve years' study and austerities was not considered fit by his teacher for the highest knowledge (*Ibid.*, IV. 10). Therefore the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. 4. 21) states: 'The seeker after the highest knowledge should not seek after the knowledge of the books, for that is mere weariness of the tongue.' The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. 2. 23) similarly points out: 'Not by the study of the Vedas is the Ātman attained, nor by intelligence, nor by much book-learning.'

[8] XI. 5. 4. 5.

[9] *Chā. U.*, (IV. 4. 1 ff; 5. 1; 6. 2; etc.) tells us the story of Satyakāma Jābāla, who was of uncertain parentage, but was admitted as a pupil by his teacher Gautama who discovered in him the real characteristics of a Brāhmaṇa, namely, spirituality and truthfulness.

[10] XI. 3. 3. 5.

strengthening the potency of the mind as an instrument for acquiring knowledge, by making it less and less objective and less and less open to contamination by contact with matter. The aim of education is thus *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* (control of the mental waves), by which the individual merges in the universal. It is the union (*yoga*) of the individual soul with the Oversoul.[11]

We may next notice the different types of institutions by which education was promoted in the country in the Vedic period. The first was the *āśrama* or hermitage, a home of learning with an individual teacher as its head, who admitted to his domestic school as many pupils as he found fit and could instruct. In these schools the pupils passed their period of studentship proper (*brahmacarya*). But there might be pupils who would prefer to continue as students through life, dedicated to the pursuit of learning and religion in the spirit of the passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 'Wishing for that world (Brahman) only, mendicants leave their homes; knowing this, the people of old did not wish for offspring . . . and they, having risen above the desire for sons, wealth, and new worlds, wandered about as mendicants.'[12] Such students are known as *naiṣṭhika brahmacārins*. They wandered about the country as *parivrājakas*, seeking higher knowledge by mutual discussions or contact with renowned *ṛṣis* (sages) and master minds. The Upaniṣads call these peripatetic votaries of knowledge and seekers after truth *carakas*, who were the diffusers of thought in the country. Thus Uddālaka Āruṇi, a Kuru-Pañcāla scholar, after finishing his education, went to the north and received further instruction from Ṛṣi Śaunaka. He also lived for some time in the land of the *Madras* to place himself under the instruction of Ṛṣi Patañcala Kāpya.[13]

There were also in the country institutions for advanced study known as *pariṣads*. The most famous *pariṣad* of the times was the Pañcāla *pariṣad*, which was patronized by the philosopher-king of the country, Pravāhaṇa

[11] Bergson similarly insists (*Morality and Religion*, p. 6) on the withdrawal of the mind from the world of matter, which 'imposes upon it its spatial forms and thus arrests the natural creativity, inwardness, and suppleness of conscious life'. 'Consciousness,' he says, 'in shaping itself into intelligence, that is to say, in concentrating itself on matter, seems to externalize itself'. It is only when the Self 'brackets' itself out from the realm of things that the psychic processes regain their normal ways. He further points out that 'the individual's consciousness, delving downwards, reveals to him, the deeper he goes, his original personality, to which he may cling as something solid, as means of escape from a life of impulse, caprice, and regret. In our innermost selves, we may discover an equilibrium more desirable than the one on the surface. Certain aquatic plants, as they rise to the surface, are ceaselessly jostled by the current; their leaves, meeting above the water, interlace, thus imparting to them stability above. But still more stable are the roots which, firmly planted in the earth, support them from below.'

[12] IV. 4. 22.

[13] *Bṛ. U.*, III. 7. 1.

[14] *Anc. Ind. Ed.*, by R. K. Mookerji, p. 126.

Jaivali, who daily drove out of his palace in his royal chariot to attend its sittings.[14]

Besides these residential schools, academies for advanced study, and circles of wandering scholars given to philosophical discussions, there were the assemblies of learned men gathered together by kings at their courts. A typical example of such a conference is described in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, stating how Janaka, king of Videha, invited to his court the learned scholars of the Kuru-Pañcāla country, 'then known for its abundance of savants', to meet in a philosophical conference, perhaps the earliest of its kind in the world. The procedure adopted by the conference was to make its proceedings as fruitful as possible.[15] Philosophy was then represented in a variety of schools with their different doctrines, and the founders and exponents of these schools were selected to present to the conference the doctrines promulgated by each school. Eight such exponents and leading philosophers were thus chosen. They were Uddālaka Āruṇi, Aśvala, Ārtabhāga, Bhujyu, Uṣasta, Kahola, Vidagdha Śākalya, and Gārgī Vācaknavī (the woman philosopher). Of these, Uddālaka was very famous as the centre of a circle of scholars who contributed most to the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. Aśvala was the *hotṛ* priest of King Janaka. Bhujyu was a fellow pupil of Āruṇi senior. The most learned of all was Yājñavalkya. King Janaka announced that he would award the royal prize to the philosopher who answered the most subtle and difficult questions that were put to him. Even the woman philosopher Gārgī publicly challenged his wisdom by posing two perplexing problems, but Yājñavalkya successfully answered her questions.

The standard of knowledge attained in those days is indicated in questions like the following one which was put to Yājñavalkya by the philosopher Uṣasta: 'When anyone says, "That is an ox, that is a horse", it is thereby pointed out. Point out to me the revealed, unveiled Brahman, the Ātman which dwells in every thing.'

From the story of the lady Gārgī just mentioned it appears that women were then considered as equals of men in their eligibility and capacity for achieving the highest knowledge. The Upaniṣads also tell us the story of Maitreyī, the worthy wife of Yājñavalkya, as his partner in the pursuit of the highest knowledge.[16]

[14] *Chā. U.*, VII. 14; *Bṛ. U.*, VI. 2. 1-7.

[15] *Bṛ. U.*, III. 8.

[16] The story is that when Yājñavalkya, after rejecting King Janaka's offer of his kingdom, decided to retire at once 'from home to homelessness' and to devote himself entirely to the quest of truth, he called his wife Maitreyī to take leave of her after providing for her living. She wisely asked him the fundamental question, 'My lord, if this whole earth full of wealth belonged to me, should I be immortal with it or not?' 'No,' replied Yājñavalkya, 'like the life of rich people will be your life: But there is no hope of immortality through wealth.'

II

FROM THE END OF THE VEDIC PERIOD TO THE BEGINNING OF THE GUPTA PERIOD

It was during this period that the Vedic scheme of education of the three upper classes of Indo-Aryan society was expanded and systematized in the aphoristic as well as the metrical Smṛtis. In the Smṛti scheme, as has been well said by a distinguished Indian authority,[17] the teacher is 'the pivot of the whole educational system'. Though the old tradition of the father as the teacher was continued down to the times of Manu and Yājñavalkya, it was the usual practice to send the boys after the ceremony of *upanayana* (investiture with the sacred thread) to live with a teacher. The texts distinguish between two types of teachers, namely, the *ācārya* (who performs the pupil's *upanayana* and teaches him the whole of the Veda) and the *upādhyāya* (who teaches the pupil only a portion of the Veda or its auxiliaries). The *ācārya's* position was very high. The pupil, according to the *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*,[18] was to look upon the teacher as God. In the *Viṣṇu Smṛti*[19] and *Manu Smṛti*[20] the *ācārya*, the father, and the mother are described as the three highest *gurus* of a man, deserving as such his utmost reverence. Elaborate rules are laid down in Manu[21] for a pupil's respectful behaviour towards his *guru*. The pupil, we are told,[22] must not even pronounce his *guru's* name without an honorific title; he must close his ears or leave the place when other people justly or unjustly slander his *guru*; and he who incurs the sin of slandering his *guru* will be born in a lower plane of existence in his next birth. The teacher on his part is to have high qualifications of learning and character. An unlearned Brāhmaṇa, we read,[23] is like an elephant made of wood and an antelope made of leather; the Brāhmaṇa (and this applies especially to the Brāhmaṇa teacher) must not, even though afflicted, utter harsh speech or injure anyone in thought or deed; he should constantly shrink from praise as from poison and should welcome scorn as nectar. The pupil, we are told in the same context, may abandon the teacher if he fails to teach or becomes a sinner. With the above we may compare an old text[24] which says that he whom a teacher devoid of learning initiates enters from darkness into darkness, and so does he who is himself unlearned. The texts distinguish between two types of students, namely, the *upakurvāṇa* (one who offers

Knowing wealth to be only a means of enjoyment, Maitreyī at once resolved: 'What should I do with that by which I shall not become immortal?' And so she chose a life of renunciation and quest of Truth.

[17] Kane, *H.Dh.*, II. p. 326. [18] I. 2. 6. 13.
[19] XXXII. 1-2. [20] II. 227-37. [21] II. 69 f.
[22] *Manu*, II. 199 f. [23] *Ibid.*, II. 157 f. [24] *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 1. 1. 11.

some remuneration to the teacher after completing his studies, and leaves to lead a home life), and the *naiṣṭhika* (one who lives perpetually with his teacher, or in the event of his death with his family). The pupil is to serve the teacher at his bath and toilette, to massage his body, and in general to do work that is pleasing and beneficial to him ; he is to do a daily routine of offering fuel to the sacred fire, going round for alms, and performing his devotions at dawn and dusk, wilful neglect of these duties being visited with appropriate penances. The pupil is to observe the prescribed rules about dress and mode of begging alms as well as about food and drink ; he should be restrained in thought and speech, and should shun personal adornment and amusements. His behaviour should be respectful towards his superiors and guarded in the presence of women. The pupil should pay no fee to his teacher in advance, but at the end of his studies he should offer something according to his means or to the teacher's desire. The strictness of the Smṛti rule on this point is reflected in the texts of Manu and Yājñavalkya, which exclude a person teaching or learning for pay from invitation to the ceremony in memory of one's ancestors and declare him to be guilty of a minor sin.[25] The educational course comprised principally the Vedas studied in the pupil's family, other recensions of the same Veda as also other Vedas being permitted to be studied thereafter. The method of teaching was oral, so much so that reliance on books was included by Nārada[26] in a list of six obstacles to knowledge.

The scheme of training for a Vedic student given above may be supplemented by an account of the education of a Kṣatriya prince given in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra.* The importance of the prince's training and discipline is repeatedly emphasized at the outset by the author[27] in the interest of the king's security and success and the stability of his family. How the course of education is to be graduated for him is shown at length.[28] After his tonsure ceremony and before reaching his seventh year, he has to learn the alphabet and the accounts ; after the *upanayana* ceremony he has to study the four sciences, namely, *trayī* (the Vedas with their auxiliaries), *ānvīkṣikī* (the three schools of philosophy), *vārttā* (economics), and *daṇḍa-nīti* (politics). Even after the completion of his studies, and his marriage in his sixteenth year, he has to go through a daily routine of receiving lessons in the art of war and in Itihāsa (historical traditions). For the rest, the prince's education is based on a sound methodology. Of the two branches of discipline (*vinaya*) namely, 'the acquired' and 'the natural', the first, we are told, should be imparted only to eager and intelligent pupils. Above all, the senses are to be brought under control by

[25] *Manu*, XI. 63 ; *Yāj.*, II. 255.

[26] Cf. *Sm. C.*, I. 167 f.

[27] *Kauṭ.*, I. 5-6, 17.

[28] *Ibid.*, I. 5-6.

checking the mental reaction to them, or else by performance of the canonical injunctions.

The above schemes of education for the Vedic student in general, and for the Kṣatriya prince in particular, are corroborated in part by other sources. In the *Mahābhārata* we have stories of pupils who distinguished themselves by exemplary devotion to their teachers. Such are Upamanyu and Āruṇi (pupils of Dhaumya) and Utaṅka (the pupil's pupil of Dhaumya).[29] We have, again, the story of Droṇa, the Brāhmaṇa who was appointed to teach the art of war to the sons of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra by their grand-uncle the warrior-sage Bhīṣma. The *Milindapañha* (The questions of Menander), a celebrated Buddhist work probably of the first century after Christ, contains a remarkable account of the current curriculum of studies for a Brāhmaṇa and for a prince.[30] The Brāhmaṇa studied the four Vedas (with their auxiliaries), astronomy and astrology, materialistic philosophy, and the science of omens. By contrast, the prince learnt the arts of managing horses, elephants, and chariots, of writing and accounts, and of waging war. In other words, the Brāhmaṇa was expected to study all the known branches of literature and science, while the Kṣatriya was required to confine his attention to the practical arts of fighting and administration. Further light is thrown upon this point by the story of the early career of Nāgasena, the hero of the last-named work, who was born in a distinguished Brāhmaṇa family, and who rose to the position of the foremost Buddhist theologian of his time. The Brāhmaṇa boys, we learn,[30] commenced their education at the teacher's residence when they reached their seventh year, and they paid him their fee in advance. After the Brāhmaṇa student had completed his education, he could, if he chose, seek further knowledge from non-Brāhmaṇa teachers, and he could live thereafter as a wandering scholar, learning from (or vanquishing) distinguished scholars in the best Upaniṣad tradition.

A fresh type of education was developed during this period in the Buddhist monasteries for the training of the newly ordained monks, the rules under this head being laid down in the section of the canon concerned with monastic discipline. The difference between this system and that of the two types mentioned above is that between what may be called the domestic and the collective (or the group) systems. The monk, to begin with, was to place himself under the guidance of a teacher, after making a formal application and receiving his tacit consent. The teacher was called *ācārya* or *upādhyāya*, the former being regarded, in contrast with the Smṛtis, as a deputy or substitute for the latter. The relations between the teacher and the pupil followed the pattern of the Smṛti scheme. The

[29] *Mbh.*, I. 3.

[30] IV. 3. 26; I. 9.

pupil was daily to serve the teacher at his bath, toilette, and meals, and on his begging tour, and nurse him during his illness. The teacher on his side was to give a complete instruction to his pupils, to supply their necessaries, to nurse them during sickness, and so forth. The teacher followed the usual method of oral instruction by answering questions or delivering discourses. The pupils were to observe strict rules about food and clothing, equipment and shelter, which were based upon the combined Smṛti scheme of duties of the Vedic student and the hermit.

The ancient educational tradition of the Upaniṣads is represented during this period by a number of examples. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we have the instance of the *āśrama* (hermitage) of Bharadvāja at Prayāga, and in the *Mahābhārata* we read of the *āśrama* of Śaunaka, distinguished as a *kulapati* or teacher of ten thousand pupils, at the Naimiṣa forest, and that of Kaṇva on the banks of the Mālinī river. The *Milindapañha* mentions a number of Buddhist hermitages of this type—such as those of Assagutta, of Dhammarakkhita at Pātaliputta, and of Āyupāla at Sāgala—which were visited by Nāgasena as a wandering scholar for the purpose of instruction or controversy.

We now turn to a new type of educational institutions which were a product of the advanced city life characteristic of this period, namely, the higher centres of learning in the metropolitan cities of our country. In the objective accounts of the Jātakas we are told how pupils from distant Mithilā and Rājagṛha in the east and from Ujjayinī in the south, not to speak of those from the Śivi and Kuru kingdoms in Uttarāpatha nearer home, flocked to Takṣaśilā, capital of the Gandhāra kingdom (in the Rawalpindi District of West Punjab), so that they might complete their education under 'world-renowned teachers'. The Jātakas also mention Banaras as a great centre of learning which was established mostly by students trained at Takṣaśilā. In the epic tradition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the city of Ayodhyā, capital of the Kośala kingdom, is said to have contained schools of Vedic and Purāṇic learning along with residences of the students. We may quote here two remarkable extracts pointing to a conscious appreciation of the value of foreign travel as constituting the urge of this particular development. In a Jātaka story we read how former kings used to send their sons to distant lands for completing their education, so that they might be trained to quell their pride, to endure heat and cold, and to acquire the ways of the world.[31] The *Mahābhārata*[32] quotes an adage to the effect that a Brāhmaṇa not going abroad (for study) and a king not going to war (when necessary) are swallowed up by the earth, just as creatures living in holes are devoured by serpents. We owe to the Jātakas some vivid sketches of the methods of education that

[31] Jātaka No. 252.

[32] XII. 57. 3.

were in vogue at Takṣaśilā. The admission, we learn, was open to pupils of all castes and stations in life with the sole exception of the Caṇḍālas (outcastes). The pupils lived with their teachers or attended as day scholars; the latter class included even married students. The pupils paid their fees in advance, or else served their teacher in lieu of the same. The course of studies comprised the three Vedas as also an unspecified (and evidently con-
may be summarized as follows: The preceptor admitted his pupil by per-
ventional) list of eighteen crafts (*śilpas*). Reference is made in particular to the study of elephant lore, of charms and spells of different kinds, of divination, and (what is most important) of archery and medicine. The number of students residing with a single teacher is frequently given as five hundred. Strict discipline was enforced by the teachers among their pupils.

Along with the types of education mentioned above there arose at this period a system of vocational and technical training. The condition of medical education at the time of the rise of Buddhism is illustrated by the narrative of the career of Jīvaka (surnamed Komārabhaccha or 'master of the science of infantile treatment'), which is told in a Pali canonical work.[33] Born as the son of a courtesan at Rājagṛha and brought up by prince Abhaya of Magadha, he was sent to study medicine under a world-renowned teacher at Takṣaśilā. There he stayed for seven years, and he completed his training by passing a difficult practical test in the knowledge of medicinal plants. His subsequent career is said to have been exceptionally brilliant, as he rose to the position of court physician of Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, and established a country-wide practice in medicine and surgery. References to the current condition of medical education occur likewise in the *Milindapañha*.[34] The student, we learn, was to apprentice himself to a teacher on payment of his fee in advance, or else on the condition of offering personal service. Further, there already existed a number of distinguished teachers of the science, who wrote treatises on its different branches. We have a more detailed account in the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*, a well-known surgical work belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era. The account.[35] may be summarized as follows: The preceptor admitted his pupil by performing a special *upanayana* ceremony, which was open to all the three upper classes, and according to some, to Śūdras as well. At the ceremony the pupil solemnly undertook in the presence of the sacred fire to observe a number of rules relating to physical purity and moral probity, and to obey his preceptor; the teacher on his side agreed with equal solemnity not to behave towards his pupil otherwise than teaching him properly. The pupil, it was emphatically stated, should acquire proficiency both in theory and

[33] *Mahāvagga*, VIII. 1. 4 f.
[34] IV. 720; VI. 11.
[35] *Suśuruta Saṁhitā*, I. 20-23.

practice, failing either of which he would be in the position of a bird clipped of one of its wings. Turning to another point, we find in two stories of the *Divyāvadāna*[36] reference to the training of the sons of rich merchants at that time. The list of studies comprised the knowledge of writing, arithmetic, coins, debts and deposits, examination of gems and residences, elephants and horses, young men and women, and so forth.

III

THE GUPTA AND POST-GUPTA PERIODS

The old systems of higher education and advanced types of educational institutions were continued during the period of the Imperial Guptas and their successors. The later Smṛtis as also the Smṛti commentaries and digests recapitulate the old rules about education with some additional explanations. To take a few instances, perpetual studentship is included in the list of forbidden practices of the *Kaliyuga* in the *Nāradīya Purāṇa*[37] and the *Āditya Purāṇa*.[38] Acceptance fees by the preceptor from his pupil is condemned in the *Varāha Purāṇa*,[39] but it is allowed tacitly or conditionally in the commentaries of Medhātithi,[40] Aparārka,[41] and Vijñāneśvara[42] as well as in the *Smṛti-candrikā*.[43] A special title of law meaning 'non-rendition of service after entering into a contract' (*abhyupetyāśuśrūṣā*) deals in these works with the duties of the student towards his teacher. Under the general heading of attendants (*śuśrūṣakas*), are included, on the one hand, the Vedic student, the craftsman's apprentice, the hired servant, and the supervisor of labour, who belong to the class of workmen (*karmakaras*), and, on the other hand, the slaves.

The methods of princely education in vogue at this period seem to have followed the older lines. From an extract of the *Mānasollāsa*, an encyclopaedic work attributed to the Western Cālukya king Someśvara III (*c.* A.D. 1126-38), we learn that the prince on reaching his eighth or tenth year should be initiated into the vow of studentship and be instructed thereafter in the Vedas as well as in the military science.[44] After completing his training, the prince should be tested by his father for his skill in the military arts, literature, and the fine arts. The high standard of the prince's education is illustrated at its best by the examples of the scholar-kings of this period such as Samudragupta, Harṣavardhana, Mahendravarman, and Yaśovarman

[36] 26. 99-100.
[37] I. 24. 13-16.
[38] Cf. *Sm. C.*, I. 29.
[39] XIV. 5.
[40] On *Manu*, III. 156.
[41] Triv. Ed., I. p 50
[42] On *Yāj.*, I. 28.
[43] Vol. I. p. 140.
[44] III. 1203-1304.

before A.D. 1000, and Someśvara III, Ballālasena, and, above all, Bhoja Paramāra in the centuries thereafter.

In the vivid account of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim I-tsing, belonging to the latter half of the seventh century, we have a striking testimony to the continuance of the old type of education in a Buddhist monastery. The monastic schools, we are further told, had, besides novices, two classes of lay pupils, namely, children reading the Buddhist scriptures with the object of ordination at some future date, and those studying secular books alone without any intention of renouncing the world.

Among the monasteries of the Gupta period, that of Nālandā in Magadha attained the highest distinction because of the magnificence of its establishment and the intellectual and moral eminence of its alumni. We owe its fullest description to two Chinese Buddhist pilgrims of the seventh century, namely Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing. The buildings consisted of eight halls besides the great college, with ten thousand resident monks (according to the former account), of eight halls as well as three hundred apartments tenanted by three thousand or three thousand five hundred monks (according to the latter version). Because of their learning and high character the monks were looked upon as models all over India. Such was the fame of this great centre of learning that it attracted students from abroad, but because of the strict admission test only two or three out of ten succeeded in getting admission. In the account of I-tsing we are further told that Nālandā in eastern and Valabhī in western India were the two places in the country that were visited by advanced students for completing their education. During the rule of the Pāla kings of eastern India, a fresh group of monasteries (namely, those of Vikramaśīla, Somapurī, Jagaddala, and Uddaṇḍapura) rose into eminence as great centres of learning. From these monasteries issued a rich literature of Tāntrika Buddhism, much of which has been preserved in Tibetan translation. Among the alumni of these monastic universities, special mention may be made of Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna (otherwise called Atīśa), who became in later life the founder of a reformed school of Buddhism in Tibet, and Vidyākara, who wrote a great Sanskrit anthology, just published, called the *Subhāṣita-ratnakośa*.[43]

The old type of forest hermitages is represented during this period by a historical example which we owe to Bāṇa, the author of the *Harṣacarita*. In the last chapter of this work the author introduces us to a great Buddhist teacher called Divākaramitra, whose hermitage in the depths of the Vindhya forest was visited by King Harṣa in search of his long-lost sister. The

[43] For the accounts of Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing *vide* the works *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* (2 vols.) by Thomas Watters, and *Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago, by I-tsing* translated by J. A. Takakusu.

author gives us a vivid picture of the cosmopolitan character of the sage's following, and the intensely scholastic atmosphere prevailing around him.

Our account of the centres of higher learning during these times will be incomplete without some reference to the numerous concrete instances of this type furnished by our historical sources. In the eleventh century the schools of Kashmir were so famous that they drew scholars from distant Gauḍa (West Bengal) for higher learning. Above all, we have a long series of inscriptions covering the whole of the period under review which record endowments of real or personal property made by individuals and communities throughout our land for the promotion of higher learning.[46]

The course of studies laid down for the Vedic student in the Smṛti works of this period follows the traditional lines. The student, says Medhātithi,[47] should study from one to three recensions of a single Veda, while the *Smṛti-candrikā* requires the student to study and follow just another recension of the Veda after going through his own. As regards primary education, the Smṛti authorities mention a sacrament called *vidyārambha* or *akṣara-svīkṛti* ('beginning of education' or 'learning the alphabet'), which was started in the boy's sixth year, or at any rate before his *upanayana*. The boy read a primer called *Mātṛkā-nyāsa* as also arithmetic. A story in the *Narmamālā*, a satirical work of the eleventh century Kashmirian writer Kṣemendra, shows that the rich householders of the time employed resident tutors for their children, sometimes with disastrous results for their own families.[48]

A complete and the most authentic account of the courses of studies during this period has come down to us from the pen of the two great Chinese Buddhist pilgrims mentioned above. According to Hiuen Tsang, the children, after mastering a short primer called 'the Twelve Chapters' or 'the *Siddha* composition', were trained in five sciences, namely, grammar, the science of arts and crafts, medicine, the science of reasoning, and the science of the internal. The curriculum of studies, according to I-tsing, comprised in graded sequence Pāṇini's grammar with the commentaries, logic, and metaphysics, in addition to which the Sūtras and the Śāstras were prescribed for monks. The parallel list of subjects studied at the Nālandā monastery comprised, according to Hiuen Tsang, not only the works of all the eighteen Buddhist schools but also the Vedas, logic, grammar, medicine, the *Atharva-vidyā*, the Sāṁkhya, and so forth.

Some light is thrown upon the training of the craftsman's apprentice

[46] For a connected account of the private and public foundations of advanced centres of learning after the inscriptions of this period *vide* Chapter XII p 368 and Chapter XVII. pp. 510 11 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* by the present writer, vols. IV and V respectively.

[47] On *Manu*, III 2.

[48] *Narmamālā*, II.

by the later Smṛtis from Nārada onwards as also by the Smṛti commentaries and digests under the head mentioned above (Breach of Contract). When the apprentice, we read, had settled with his preceptor the period of his apprenticeship, the latter was to take him to his house, train him in his craft, and treat him as his son. The preceptor refusing to give him his training or making him do some other work was liable to a fine, while the apprentice deserting his flawless teacher was liable to corporal punishment or compulsory repatriation. According to the great Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who visited the extreme south of India in the closing years of the thirteenth century, the boys of the tradesmen of the Pāṇḍya kingdom, on reaching their thirteenth year, were dismissed by their parents with a small pocket-money for earning their living by trade. Thus they grew up to be very dexterous and keen traders. Testimony to the high standard of the craftsmen's training is furnished by the superb remains of art and architecture that have come down to us from this period.

Turning, lastly, to the condition of female education during these times, we have to mention that the ban on Vedic study by women and on their utterance of Vedic *mantras* at their sacraments, which had been imposed by the older Smṛtis, was continued and developed by their successors. The *Smṛti-candrikā*,[49] significantly enough, explains as belonging to a different age cycle the text of the *Hārīta Smṛti* dividing women into two classes, namely, students of the sacred lore (*brahmavādinīs*) and those married straightway (*sadyovadhūs*). This development is no doubt connected with the tendency in the later Smṛtis to reduce progressively the marriageable age of girls. On the other hand, we know from other sources that women of the upper classes enjoyed such opportunities for education in the fine arts that some of them became accomplished poetesses and authorities on *belles-lettres*. Of such we have historical examples in Princess Rājyaśrī (sister of King Harṣavardhana of the house of Thanesar) and Avantisundarī, wife of the dramatist and rhetorician Rājaśekhara. The story of Princess Kādambari and Mahāśvetā in Bāṇa's prose romance[50] and that of Kāmandakī in Bhavabhūti's great drama[51] seem to suggest the existence of regular institutions where girls received their training, sometimes in the company of male students. In the stories of the *Upamiti-bhavaprapañca-Kathā*,[52] a Jaina allegorical work of the tenth century, we are told how princesses were skilled in the arts of painting, music, and versification.

[49] I. 60-63. [50] *Kādambarī*, p. 240. [51] *Mālatī-Mādhava*, Act I.
[52] Ed. by Peterson and Jacobi, pp. 354, 453-59, and 875-92.

42

ECONOMIC IDEAS OF THE HINDUS

Economic ideas and practices as reflected principally in the literature on law and polity as well as Epics and Purāṇas

VĀRTĀ AND ARTHA-ŚĀSTRA

ANCIENT Indians, even before the days of Kauṭilya, divided knowledge or learning (*śāstra* or *vidyā*) into four branches.[1] viz. (i) *ānvīkṣikī*, (ii) *trayī*, (iii) *vārtā*, and (iv) *daṇḍanīti*, which in the light of traditional interpretation, may be broadly interpreted respectively as (i) philosophy, (ii) three Vedas or religion, (iii) economics, and (iv) polity. The word *vārtā* primarily or etymologically represents *vṛtti* or means of livelihood, but was particularly employed to denote the *vṛtti* allotted to the Vaiśyas ; secondarily *vārtā* meant the science that had *vārtā* as its subject of study.

Vārtā, according to Kauṭilya and others, dealt with agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade.[2] Later on, money-lending or usury was included under *vārtā* by the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Śukra-Nītisāra*, etc., and the *Mahābhārata* included '*vividhāni śilpāni*' (arts and crafts), referred to by the *Devī Purāṇa* as *karmānta* (manufacture).[3] Thus, in modern nomenclature, *vārtā* dealt with the economics of agriculture, trade, banking, and industry, which shows that consumption, distribution, and taxation, forming part of modern economics, were left out of the scope of *vārtā*. These latter topics were included in the works on Artha-śāstra and Dharma-śāstra.

Artha-śāstra, in its technical sense, covers a wider field than *vārtā* and *daṇḍanīti*, and may be said to include the subjects of jurisprudence, politics, and economics. It has been called '*Arthaveda*' and classed as an Upaveda, either of the *Ṛg-Veda* or of the *Atharva-Veda*.[4] The *Arthaśāstra* makes it clear that *vārtā* and Artha-śāstra were quite distinct. The latter never dealt with *artha* in the sense of wealth, which was the subject-matter of *vārtā*.[5]

That the ancient Indians fully recognized the importance of economic science would be evident not only from its inclusion among the fourfold

[1] Cf. *Kauṭ.*, I. 2, p. 6.

[2] *Kauṭ.*, I. 4, p 8 ; *Kām.*, II. 14 ; *Viṣṇu P.*, V. 10. 28.

[3] *Bhāg. P.*, X. 24. 21 ; *Śukra*, I 156 ; *Mbh.* XII. 167. 11-12 : *Devī P.*, 67. 13

[4] *Caraṇavyūha*, ascribed to Śaunaka, tags Arthaśāstra as an *Upaveda* to *Ṛ. V.*, while *Caraṇavyūha* of *A.V.*, *Pariśiṣṭa* (49·3), links it to *A.V.*, *Vāyu P.* (61·79), *Viṣṇu P.* (III. 6. 28), etc. mention Arthaśāstra as an *Upaveda*.

[5] Cf. *Kauṭ.*, I. 4, p. 8 (about *vārtā*) and XV. 1, p. 427 (about *Arthaśāstra*).

[6] *Mbh.*, II. 5 79, III. 150. 30, XII. 68. 35, XII. 263. 3, etc. ; *Rām.*, II. 100. 47 ; *Kām.*, I. 12 ; *Śukra* I. 156 ; *Nītiv.*, p. 93.

division of *vidyās* and from its forming an important part of the regal curriculum, but also from the passages expressly stressing its necessity for the economic stability of a country and so on. These passages indicate that *vārtā* was considered as essential for the material interests of the people as were the Vedas for their spiritual well-being; we may take it to have been regarded as not less important than the Vedas.

Equally interesting as the conception of economics are the ideas constituting the Indian conception of wealth. Analysing the several meanings of *dhana* and *artha*, which stand for wealth, K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar states the root ideas of the ancient Indian conception of wealth to be 'its material quality, its appropriability, its being the result of acquisition, its not being quite identical with gold, its consumability, and its attractiveness due to scarcity'.[7] The Artha-śāstra, the Epics, the Smṛtis and other works on ancient Indian economics knew the importance of wealth in the scheme of life for gaining the *puruṣārthas* (ends of human life), and were fully conscious of the depressing influence of poverty. Wealth, however, was never regarded as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. Contrary to common notions, they condemned asceticism and held those seeking to embrace the ascetic order without discharging their duties liable to punishment.

RURAL ECONOMICS

Agriculture: Indian economists, both ancient and modern, give predominance to rural economics, because agriculture has been the occupation of the population throughout the ages. Along with cattlebreeding and dairy farming, agriculture constituted the most important part of *vārtā*, which a king was enjoined to study.[8] Though agriculture was prescribed as a profession mainly for the Vaiśyas, and as a secondary occupation for the Śūdras, the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas were permitted to follow it under certain restrictive regulations.[9]

Land: Land, without which agriculture would not be possible, labour, capital, and organization appear to have been the four agents of production according to ancient Indian economists.

According to Śukra, land is the source of all wealth.[10] The creation of proprietary interests in land and the laying down of elaborate rules for the survey and demarcation of individual holdings, since the days of Kauṭilya, probably indicate the recognition by ancient Indian economists of 'the

[7] *Ancient Indian Economic Thought*, p. 22.

[8] *Kauṭ.*, I. 5, p. 10.

[9] They were not to engage themselves personally in agriculture, but through the agency of others. There is a conflict of opinion among the writers of Dharma-śāstras about allowing the Brāhmaṇas to follow the profession of agriculture. *Vide* Kane, *H.Dh.*, II. pp. 124-126.

[10] Cf. *Śukra*, I. 179 f.

magic of property' in dealing with agriculture. Development of land was the principal factor in the success of agriculture. The State and the community were enjoined to strive for the prosperity of agriculture. The creation of a beneficial interest by law in favour of the person who first cleared the forest or reclaimed waste land facilitated the clearing of jungles and bringing of waste land under cultivation, which were laid down as duties.[11] For ensuring the productivity of uncultivable or waste land fertilizers were to be used.[12] That our ancient economists knew the law of Diminishing Return would appear from their rules reserving certain types of land for particular crops or for pasture alone, and from their plea for extending the area under cultivation.[13] In the interest of agriculture the non-cultivating proprietors were to be discouraged.[14]

The great advance in agriculture in ancient India and the thorough knowledge of the minute details of agricultural pursuits possessed by Indian economists are seen not only in the treatises of Kauṭilya followed by Śukra but also in the Smṛti literature. The fact that the following principles and practices, along with several others, were clearly understood by them speaks volumes about their sharp perception: the interdependence of agriculture and cattle farming; the use of fertilizers; the rotation of crops; the relative advantages of extensive and intensive cultivation; the evils of fragmentation of holdings; the relative advantages of large- and small-scale farming according to the crops cultivated; the adjustment of crops to soils and *vice versa*; the wisdom of carefully selecting seed grains; the value of forest conservation and game preservation to the agriculturist; the use of fallow the value of even inferior land in the vicinity of centres of population irrigation by rain, rivers, tanks, reservoirs, and mechanical agencies agricultural drainage; prevention, correction, and eradication of numerous risks or blights, such as rain, drought, hail, ravages of locusts, pests, mice, birds, and wild pigs; the beneficial uses of opening up communications.[15]

Highly beneficent agricultural administration and a good knowledge of rural economics are seen from Kauṭilya's precepts regarding irrigation, fixing of prices, etc. The members of a village were held jointly and severally liable for keeping their roads, water channels, and tanks in efficient repair, which ensured perfect maintenance of irrigational works. Any damage to such works of public utility was to be urgently rectified even from the resources of temples. Special facilities were to be given to those who constructed tanks, dams, and roads out of piety, so that the State might

[11] *Kauṭ.*, II. 1, p. 47; *Manu*, IX. 44.
[12] *Ibid.*, II. 24, p. 117.
[13] *Ibid.*, II. 24, p. 117.
[14] *Ibid.*, II. 1, p. 47.
[15] Cf. *Kauṭ.*, II. 1 (p. 47), II. 2 (p 49), II. 24 (pp. 115-8), VII. 11 (p. 297), VIII. 4 (p. 334), etc.

receive co-operation from individuals in providing irrigation works. Fixing fair prices for agricultural products at frequent intervals not only served the interest of the people as producers and consumers, but of the State as well, since a large part of its revenue was collected in kind. In order to meet the menace of famine, different parts of the kingdom were to be provided with granaries capable of holding grain sufficient to meet the normal requirements of three years, which were always to be kept full.[16]

The interests of the cultivators were guarded against distraction or nuisance by banning the intrusion of actors, dancers, singers, drummers, buffoons, and wandering minstrels into villages.[17] Officers and servants of the king were to live outside the limits of the village, apparently to save the villagers from oppression. Soldiers also were prohibited from entering villages except on the king's business, and even then they were not to oppress cultivators or have any dealings with them. It was laid down that the army was to be used for no other purpose than fighting.[18] Our ancient economists advocated an uninterrupted pursuit of agriculture even in times of war, and the accounts of foreign travellers confirm that agriculturists were unaffected by the march of armies and the clash of arms. The economic interests of cultivators were safeguarded by fixing fair prices and by providing against combines and cornering by traders with a view to lowering agricultural prices.[19]

Labour: Labour was the second important factor of production, and our economists fully appreciated its value for efficient production. Kauṭilya and Śukra not merely permit the employment of women in State factories and agricultural operations, but prescribe it. Though on the basis of the evidence of the Jātakas, other Buddhist works, and the Smṛtis a dismal picture has been painted concerning the social and economic position of a labourer, which is stated to have been worse than that of a slave, the labour regulations in Śukra and other works indicate a different state of affairs.[20] According to Śukra, the remuneration of a labourer should be proportionate to his productivity and qualification, and the wages should be sufficient to maintain the labourer and his family in tolerable comfort. It is not clear whether Śukra's rules,[21] which provide leisure hours, leave, and bonus for domestic servants, and workmen's insurance in sickness, old age, or accident, show the actual practice or are merely his own views in the matter. The labourer or servant, on the other hand, had to pay penalties for breach of

[16] *Śukra*, IV. 2. 25.
[17] *Kauṭ.*, II. 1. p. 48.
[18] Cf. *Śukra*, V. 90-93.
[19] *Kauṭ.*, IV. 2, p. 205.
[20] A. N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, II. pp. 424-35; *contra*, K. V. R. Aiyangar, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-11; K. T. Shah, *Ancient Foundations of Economics in India*, pp. 54, 94.
[21] *Śukra*, II. 480-18.

contract in addition to being liable for damages caused by his neglect. Further, strikes of workmen to raise wages were declared illegal.

The influence of sacred literature on the economists is seen from their making a distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' types of labour, the test of purity lying in the nature of the occupation and the material employed.[22] This distinction perhaps resulted in the segregation of the two higher castes from the manual labourers.

These are some of the concepts of the old writers on economics—Kauṭilya, Kāmandaka, Śukra, and others—regarding labour: hired labour cannot be abolished; efficient labour results from training; workmen are incapable of conducting industry; competent supervisory authority is necessary for getting work done; a proper output can be ensured only through payment by results.

Capital: Our economists visualized the importance of capital to industry and other productive undertakings. Several factors conspired to bring about scarcity of loan capital, of which we get indication from the very high maximum interest mentioned in the Smṛtis and the reference to fifteen percent as the just rate of interest both in the *Arthaśāstra* and in the Smṛtis.[23] The lack of capital was due to extravagance and hoarding. The State consumed a large slice in the form of taxes, rents, cesses, fines, etc. The normal aim of our ancient financiers to budget for heavy and recurring surpluses resulted in swelling the State hoard. The danger of prodigal kings wasting the accumulations of their predecessors on their personal gratifications was always there. Another factor contributing to liquidate State hoards was the presence of a large number of parasitical subcastes, or professions, who mostly depended on State patronage.

The inference about the scarcity of private capital, or about its falling far short of the demands for it, is also implied by the evidence in the *Mahābhārata*, which advocates that the State should advance cash grants and seed grain to agriculturists and run a large number of industrial concerns.[24]

Organization: Of the two types of organizations or corporations, viz. the capitalistic and the guild, the latter deserves some mention here; it will be exhaustively dealt with in the next chapter; while the capitalistic organizations are considered in the next section of this chapter.

The movement for the organization of guilds started towards the end

[22] For *śubha* (pure) and *aśubha* (impure) work and different kinds of servers or labourers to do them, cf. Kane, *H.Dh.*, III. pp. 482-6.

[23] *Kauṭ.*, III. 11, p. 174. *Nārada* (IV. 105-6), allows even 8% per month, while 2% is not improper according to him.

[24] *Mbh.*, II. 5. 77-78.

of the Vedic period, and Pāṇini refers to the *gaṇa*, *pūga*, *vrāta*, and *saṅgha*.[25] It appears that the words *gaṇa* and *saṅgha* were used to denote any corporation or union for political or other purposes, while *pūga* and *śreṇī* signified corporations of merchants, artisans, or others whose principal object was to gain wealth by trade or industry. The Dharma-Sūtras indicate that the chief industries were all organized in guilds. *Śreṇī*, *naigama* (or *nigama*), *pāṣaṇḍa*, *samūha*, etc. find mention in later literature.[26] Workers' or craftsmen's guilds correspond to the modern labour organizations, while Merchants' guilds approximate to the Guild Merchant of mediaeval Europe.

Early literature provides very little information about the constitution and organization of these guilds. The Dharma-Sūtras recognized the validity of the laws and customs established by the guilds of cultivators, traders, usurers, herdsmen, artisans, craftsmen, etc., whose headmen occupied a high place in the royal tribunal. Manu and Yājñavalkya invest the customs of the *śreṇīs* and analogous bodies with legal authority.[27] The Dharma-Sūtras and Smṛtis recognize the binding force of the agreements with the *saṅghas*, breaches of which were dealt with severely, the punishments ranging from heavy fine or imprisonment to confiscation and banishment.[28]

Kauṭilya's elaborate treatment of this subject demonstrates the important role played by the guilds in the economic system of the Mauryan and post-Mauryan epochs. They effectively controlled local sources of production, arts and crafts, and trades and industries, and served as an important link between the central authority and the several economic units in the country.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade as an important form of economic activity appears to have existed from the Vedic or even protohistoric times in India, and its indispensable accessories—money, currency, credit, exchange, and banking—were freely used and understood not only by the trading community and the administrative staff but by the mass of people as well.

Kauṭilya advocates considerable State control both in trade and industry. It was obligatory on traders to get a licence, while foreign traders

[25] *Pāṇ.*, V. 2. 21 (*vrāta*), V. 2. 52 (*pūga*, *gaṇa*, *saṅgha*). Kātyāyana includes *gaṇa*, *pāṣaṇḍa*, *pūga*, *vrāta*, and *śreṇī* under *samūha* or *varga*.

[26] For explanations of the different terms denoting group organizations, employed in the above paragraph, refer to Kane, *H.Dh.*, II. pp. 66-69, III. 486-489; Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, Ch. I; K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, *op. cit.*, pp. 58, 184 ff; Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India*, pp. 29-34, 39.

[27] *Manu*, VIII. 41; *Yāj.*, I. 361.

[28] *Viṣṇu Dh. S.*, V. 167; *Manu.*, VIII. 219-20; *Yāj.*, II. 187.

required a passport in addition. In connection with prices, which were controlled by the State, it is interesting to observe that ancient Indian economists had a fairly correct conception of the fundamental causes of value. According to both Kauṭilya and Śukra, the two factors to be considered in fixing value or price are (i) the cost of production as determining the supply, and (ii) the demand for the article as determined by its utility.[29] Even writers of the Smṛtis correctly understood the causes of value, as seen from Manu's precepts for the guidance of the king in fixing the rates of duty.[30] References to absolute and relative prices are found in Śukra and in Buddhist works.

Wholesale prices for goods were fixed by the Superintendent of Commerce, as they passed the Customs House. A margin of profit was allowed to retailers. The public, consumers, and customers were protected by the State, which employed an army of spies and market inspectors against unauthorized prices and fraudulent transactions. Goods had to be sold at fixed market-places, and the dealer had to specify particulars as to quality, quantity, and price, which were scrutinized and recorded in official books. The duties of the Superintendent of Commerce thus included not only the prevention or minimization of the chances of deceit, or of undue advantage being taken by the seller over the buyer, but also ensuring that the prices were not exorbitant or unconscionable, and that the material, its style, quantity, or measure precisely corresponded to the terms of the bargain[31]

To encourage, promote, and facilitate trade, both inland and foreign, States were enjoined to improve and increase means of communication and transport. They had also to secure new markets for the surplus products of the country. Rest-houses and store-houses were to be provided for traders, for whose protection proper police escorts were also recommended. River boats and ocean-going ships were to be pressed into service.[32] As a compensation for the taxes paid by the trade, the government granted it security against thieves, forest tribes, wild forest folk, etc., and undertook to make good losses in transit.[33] To encourage imports, suitable rebates were granted to foreign traders, if current rates did not leave a proper margin of profit for them.[34]

Several facilities were afforded to encourage foreign trade. Foreign merchants could sue in Indian courts, and were protected from being

6, pp.
[30] *Manu* VII. 127.
[31] *Kauṭ.* II. 16 (pp. 98-9). II. 21 (pp. 110-11), IV. 2 (p. 205); *Manu*, IX. 286-91; *Yāj.*, II. 245-6; 296.
[32] *Kauṭ.* II. 34 (p. 141), II. 22 (p. 113), II. 28 (pp. 126-8).
[33] *Kauṭ.* II. 21 (p. 111), IV. 13 (p. 234).
[34] *Kauṭ* II. 16, p. 98.

harassed by suits against them in local courts.[35] This wise fostering of foreign trade enabled India to have a permanent excess of exports over imports, resulting in India becoming 'a veritable sink of precious metals'.

Localization of industry and creation of local markets for the sale of products resulted from the caste and guild organizations. Elaborate rules were framed for the organization, establishment, and management of markets. To ensure the freedom of the market, the king was prohibited from going to the market with his retinue. Cornering, speculation, smuggling, adulteration, cheating, and dishonesty were punishable, according to the gravity of the offence, with fines, or imprisonment, or even mutilation.

Kauṭilya advocates State monopoly of industries on the basis of risk, cost, or rarity. The State was advised to become both the manufacturer and trader, and to sell articles through departmental agency. Mines, comprising those of gold, silver, diamonds, gems, precious stones, copper, lead, tin, iron, and bitumen, which provided the main source of State revenue, were nationalized. Pearl, mother-of-pearl, conch shell, coral, etc. were explored from ocean mines, and it was a State concern. Ores provided minerals, while *rasas* like mercury came from oil fields. Salt manufacture was a State monopoly, for which licences were granted to private lessees of salt fields. There was also State monopoly of armament industry, coinage, and ship-building; further, the State controlled the manufacture and sale of wines and liquors. Cotton, oil, and sugar factories were also State concerns.[36]

Prison factories, worked through penal labour, added to the State produce. Yarns of cotton, wool, silk, and jute came from the State spinning factory, which manufactured clothing of all types, coat-of-mail, blankets, curtains, and ropes.[37] For spinning yarn, helpless and *purdah* women were employed under women supervisors.

Just as rent or profit was a compensation, interest constituted a just return to the capitalist. *Kusīda* is the term used for the lending of money on interest, and the early Dharma-Sūtras display a strong prejudice against usury. Later, however, money-lending or usury (*kusīda*) came to be recognized as one of the four divisions of *vārtā*, as already stated, and interest came to be regarded as a normal share of the national dividend. That our ancient economists knew the difference between gross interest and

[35] *Ibid.*, II. 16, p. 98.

[36] It is interesting to note that according to Medhātithi (on *Manu*, VIII. 400) royal monopolies extended to elephants, as they were most useful to kings, as also to saffron, silks, and woollens in Kashmir, horses in the West, and precious stones and pearls in the South, private trading in them being punishable with confiscation of all property. Saffron is still a monopoly of Kashmir.

[37] *Kauṭ.*, II. 23.

net interest, and held sound views about the nature and necessity of interest, may be inferred from the references in the *Arthaśāstra*, Smṛtis, and *Agni Purāṇa*.[38]

There are different rates of interest for loans with or without pledge. According to the Dharma-śāstras, the rates of interest varied with the caste of the borrower,[39] presumably on the assumption that his credit-worthiness varied directly with his caste. Fifteen per cent per annum was the normal rate of interest, but it could be higher according to the security given, the nature of the risk involved, and other factors. The welfare of the debtor was safeguarded by forbidding compound interest, interest above the normal customary rate, accumulation of interest exceeding the amount of the principal, or personal service in lieu of interest. Further, no interest was to accumulate on debts due from minors, from those engaged in long-drawn sacrifices, and from those who were diseased, or in their teacher's homes as students. Interest in excess of the legal rate was permissible under certain circumstances, Yājñavalkya allowing a higher rate by agreement. In the case of certain select articles the rule about *damdupat* was waived.

Banking: Some kind of banking may be inferred from the elaborate Dharma-śāstra rules regarding loans, deposits, interest, etc. Guilds, partnerships, and joint-stock organizations must have helped the evolution of the system of group credit. The Jātakas and the *Arthaśāstra* testify to the existence of instruments of credit, promissory notes, or debt sheets, and banking pledges, and book credits.[40]

Coinage: Though the bulk of retail transactions was conducted by barter on account of the scarcity of currency and the low prices of products, the use of coins was also in evidence. Barter, however, commended itself to the higher castes in early times when the sale of, or trade in, articles of production by the higher castes was looked down upon. Further, the prohibition of the use of gold and silver by many classes worked in favour of barter. Money was more common in urban areas.

It seems that coins originated and developed in India before foreign contact. Indian coiange, comprising punch-marked silver and copper coins, goes back to about 600 B.C. The earliest coins were based on the weight system given in the *Manu Smṛti*, of which the unit was *raktikā* (*rati* or *guñja* berry, i.e. $1\frac{5}{16}$ grain troy). *Suvarṇa* was the standard gold coin of eighty *ratis*, while the copper coin of the same weight was called *kārṣāpaṇa*, though a copper *paṇa* of a hundred *ratis* was also known. *Purāṇa* or *dharaṇa* was a silver coin of thirty-two *ratis*. Actual specimens show that rulers,

[38] *Agni. P.*, 253. 63-66 ; also *Kaut.*, and the Smṛtis on *Ṛṇādāna* (recovery of debts
[39] *Viṣṇu Dh. S.*, VI. 2 ; *Manu*, VIII 142 ; *Yāj.*, II. 37.
[40] *Jāt.*, I. 121, 230 ; IV. 256 ; etc. ; *Kauṭ.*, II. 7.

guilds, and even merchants issued these coins duly stamped with their symbol, signifying correctness of weight and purity of the metal. Under the *Arthaśāstra* scheme, coinage was a State monopoly, and officials under the Mint Master (*lakṣaṇādhyakṣa*) received bullion from the public to be struck into coins on payment of seigniorage charges.

Commercial (*Capitalists'*) *organizations*: Of the different kinds of corporate organizations mentioned earlier, *pūga* alone, according to Kātyāyana, corresponds to a merchants' guild. Partnerships (*sambhūya-samutthāna*) or combines, which constituted another type of industrial and commercial organization, are included among the eighteen titles of law by the Smṛtis. The profit and loss in partnership was to be imposed in accordance with the share of each partner.

The guilds were autonomous; they taxed themselves; and they were competent to proceed with any lawful undertaking and to do everything not prejudicial to State interests. The king was enjoined to restrain the illegal, immoral, indecent, or seditious activities of the corporations. Dissension or dissidence was not tolerated, and offenders received severe punishments.

By the time of Kauṭilya, the *saṅghas* and *śreṇīs* had become very rich and powerful, and some of them maintained troops of their own. The *Arthaśāstra* refers to the danger of provoking these corporations, and advocates several methods of exploiting them in the king's name.[41] The potential danger to the State from the unrestrained power of these organizations seems to underlie the severe regulations restricting their activities. The Smṛtis, however, generally favour the growth of *samūhas* (industrial and commercial guilds).

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

That ancient Indian writers on policy recognized the importance of the State treasury would be evident from their placing *kośa* (treasury) as one of the seven constituent elements of the State and holding it as of supreme importance, along with army. The prime necessity of a competent army and a rich treasury for subduing the subversive elements on the king's side as well as those in the opposite camp for the well-being of the State was constantly emphasized. Gautama[42] goes to the length of declaring the treasury to be the basis of the other six basic elements of the State. The *Arthaśāstra*,[43] the *Mahābhārata*,[44] *Kamandakīya Nītisāra*,[45] *Viṣṇudharmottara*

[41] *Kauṭ.*, XI. 1 (pp. 378 ff).
[42] Cf. *Sarasvatī-vilāsa*, p. 46: *Kośas tu sarvathā abhisaṁrakṣya ityāha Gautamaḥ; tanmūlatvāt prakṛtināṁ iti.*
[43] II. 8, p. 65: *Kośapūrvāḥ sarvāraṁbhāḥ.*
[44] XII. 119. 16.
[45] XIII. 33.

Purāṇa,[45] and other works hold that the king depends on the treasury, or that the treasury is the root of the State. Revenue and the army, as stated earlier, were the two great pillars of the State in ancient India.

The head of the treasury department was called *Koṣādhyakṣa*, under whom was the superintendent of granary (Koṣṭhāgārādhyakṣa). A large portion of the State revenue was collected in kind; and the proper keeping and periodical renewal of the collected stock rendered the task of the treasury department in ancient India arduous. The works cited in the previous paragraph stress that a full treasury and ample reserve funds should be included among the essential constituents of the State; they also regard their deterioration as a very serious national calamity. They insist on a full and flowing treasury for the State by appropriating a large portion of the State revenue for the creation of a reserve fund or treasury, which is not to be touched except on occasions of grave calamity. This policy of the *Arthaśāstra* and later works on economics is quite understandable when one considers the unstable political conditions of the time demanding constant preparedness for war because of the constant danger from a neighbouring State. Further, provision had to be made against famines—not a phenomenon of rare occurrence even then—which necessitated the maintenance of the treasury and gold hoards. In ancient times, when State loans were unknown, the only means available for a State to tide over a crisis was the possession of a well-stocked treasury and granary. Richness of the treasury depended on the surplus of revenue over expenditure; and therefore elaborate rules were laid down for the efficient accounting of public receipts and expenditure and their auditing. Śukra emphasizes the keeping of daily, monthly, and annual accounts, and the entering of the several items of income on the left side of the accounts and those of the expenditure on the right.[47] Somadeva recommends the appointment of auditors when there is discrepancy in the items of income and expenditure.[48]

Revenue, in several forms, constituted the chief factor of the State income. Kauṭilya[49] classifies the sources or items of revenue differently at different places. Two important classifications are *āyaśarīra* (body of income) and *āyamukha* (source of income), each being subdivided under seven heads. *Āyaśarīra*, which refers to the convenient centres of collection, comprises *durga* (fortified cities), *rāṣṭra* (rural areas), *khani* (mines), *setu* (irrigation works), *vana* (forests), *vraja* (herds), and *vāripatha* (river-borne trade routes). *Bhāga* (royal share), *vyāji* (compensation), *parigha* (gate duty), *kḷpta* (fixed tax), *rūpika* (premia on coins), and *atyaya* (money fine) are the subdivisions of *āyamukha*. Another classification is *anyajāta* (accidental

[45] II. 61. 17.
[46] *Nītiv.*, p. 189.
[47] II. 319-21, 370.
[48] II. 6, p. 60.

revenue), *vartamāna* (current revenue), and *paryuṣita* (outstanding revenue).[50] Kāmandaka enumerates eight principal categories (*aṣṭavarga*) of filling the treasury through the heads of departments, viz. agriculture, trade routes (both land and water), the capital, water embankments, catching of elephants, working mines and collecting gold etc., levying wealth (from the rich), and founding towns and villages in uninhabited tracts.[51] It will be seen that these classifications do not differentiate between direct and indirect taxes, rents, fees, royalties, and non-tax receipts.

In connection with revenue administration, besides the several superintendents dealing with different branches of revenue, such as taxation, finance, state dues, fees, tolls, and mines, mentioned in the section entitled Adhyakṣapracāra, Kauṭilya refers to two important officials, *samāhartā* and *sannidhātā*. It is interesting to note that the duties of the *samāhartā* (Collector General)[52] embrace all the components of *āyaśarīra*. He supervised the collection of revenue in the whole State. All the *adhyakṣas* (Superintendents), whose duties covered the entire range of the civic and economic life of the people, were subordinate to the *samāhartā*. His functions included the maintenance of census and survey, recording the enumeration of the people, their houses and cattle as also the measurement of their pastures, gardens, arable lands, etc. Coḷa records confirm the existence of such surveys. The *samāhartā* controlled expenditure also and was advised to exert himself for the increase in revenue and decrease in expenditure. The *sannidhātā*[53] appears to have been a chamberlain and a treasurer, a custodian of all revenues realized in cash and kind, and was in charge of stores of all kinds, construction of treasuries, warehouses, armouries, and the like, as also of royal trading houses, courts of justice, etc.

The principal source of revenue in ancient India was taxation. In the financial theories of the *Arthaśāstra* and allied works, the ruler's right to levy taxes and contributions and the people's obligation to pay them arise from an implied contract between the State and its subjects. The imposition of taxes depends solely on the protection afforded by the State. The principles that guided the State in matters of taxation show the solicitude of the economists for the welfare of the community. Taxation was to be reasonable and equitable ; the criterion of judging its equitableness consisted in the feeling of the State on the one hand and that of the agriculturists and the traders on the other, that they have received adequate and reasonable return for their mutual services. The first principle was that in matters of taxation the State was to be guided by the rules in the Smṛtis. The tax was to be collected at a specified time and place and at a definite proportion or

[50] II. 6, p. 61: *Vartamānāḥ paryuṣto 'nyajātaśca āyaḥ*.
[51] *Kām.*, V. 78-79.
[52] II. 6, 35 ; pp. 59-62, 141-143.
[53] *Kauṭ.*, II. 5.

percentage. Any increase in taxation, if unavoidable, was to be gradual. Additional taxation was an exceptional measure to be resorted to only under grave national emergency in the absence of any other alternative. An article was to be taxed only once. Net profit, and not gross earning, was the basis for taxation of trade and industry.

In the context of the canons of taxation it is worthwhile to note whether there were any limits to the king's levying exorbitant taxes. Kauṭilya[54] has considered the point, and according to him, the threat of disaffection among his subjects and their possible migration to another country appears to have worked as a deterrent on kings taxing their subjects beyond their means. In a similar vein the *Mahābhārata*[55] states that the Vaiśyas, if neglected, would disappear from the kingdom and would reside in the forest. Yājñavalkya[56] points out that the king who extracts taxes by unjust means not only loses his wealth but also goes to destruction along with his relatives.

On a careful examination of the grounds of partial or total remission of taxation, it is found that religious beliefs as well as humanitarian ideas of the age were responsible for exempting from taxation certain classes of people like learned Brāhmaṇas and Bhikṣus. The dumb, the deaf, the blind, students studying in a Gurukula, and hermits were also not taxable; infants, those far advanced in age, women newly confined or destitute, poor widows, and people otherwise helpless were also tax-free. In view of the fact that certain villages supplied recruits to the State army, those military villages were exempted from taxation. Untaxable property included articles required for sacrifice, earnings of craftsmanship, receipts from alms, and articles worth less than a copper coin. Only a nominal tax was to be collected for the first four or five years from those agriculturalists who newly brought land under cultivation and made it more fertile and productive; but the tax in their case also gradually rose to the normal rate in subsequent years.

Kauṭilya advises the tapping of every available source for securing revenue, and recommends emergency measures under special circumstances. Later authorities have supplemented these different items by suggesting fresh avenues. Some important sources of taxation are listed below illustratively:

(i) Land revenue formed the mainstay of the State finances. The rate of land tax, which was fixed at one-sixth in theory, varied from one-twelfth, one-tenth, one-eighth, or one-sixth in normal times to one-fourth or even one-third in times of emergency. Besides general land revenue, there were other cesses and charges on land, which included water cess, periodical levy

[54] VII. 5. pp. 276-7; also . . . *paratra gacchāmaḥ* . . . (p. 394).
[55] XII. 87. 36.
[56] I. 340-1.

on agricultural live-stock of the cultivators, taxes on agricultural and industrial products, and tax in cash on certain special crops. Under this heading also comes income from State properties, viz. crown land, waste land, forests, and natural tanks and reservoirs.

(ii) Revenue from cities, trade, and industry, falling broadly under 'fortified city' (*durga*) and 'country part' (*rāṣṭra*), constituted another important item, including house tax. There were also profession tax ; property tax ; income from slaughter houses, liquor, and gambling ; licence fees on weights and measures ; tolls, customs, octroi, port dues, and transit duties ; fee from passports ; contributions from artisans in cash or service ; dues collected from Bāhirikas ; charge of one-fiftieth of the interest earned by money-lenders,[57] analogous to modern income-tax ; and shop tax, not mentioned in the Smṛtis but referred to in the inscriptions.[58]

(iii) Income from State monopolies, state establishments, etc. provided another source, and these comprised mines and minerals, salt, saffron, mint, workshops, State manufactories, jail industries, and elephants.

(iv) Under miscellaneous and special taxes and revenues came fines from law courts ; forced labour ; income from unclaimed, lost, or ownerless property ; escheat ; treasure trove ; occasional taxes such as those paid on the birth of a prince ; and irregular receipts from plunder, tributes from feudatories, etc. Taxes which pilgrims had to pay, such as, those levied by Caulukya Siddharāja (A.D. 1094- *c.* 1143) of Gujarat from visitors to Somanātha, those collected at Gayā from Kashmirians performing *śrāddha* (offerings to the dead) there,[59] or the pilgrim taxes collected from the Jains which Kumārapāla (*c.* A.D. 1145-71) of Gujarat is stated to have abolished, come under special taxes ; those levied at the time of the *upanayana* (sacred thread ceremony), marriage, Vedic sacrifices, and the like also fall under the same category.[60] Another variety of tax levied is the *Turuṣka-daṇḍa* and the *Malla-daṇḍa*, which were raised to meet the expenses necessitated by the invasions of the Turks and the Mallas respectively. The Coḷa king Vīrarājendra (A.D. 1063-70) supplied a later instance of levying a special tax to finance his war against the Cālukyas of Veṅgī.[62]

(v) Emergency revenue formed yet another source. Sources of raising emergency revenue were to be tapped only under exceptional circumstances when the treasury was empty, and there was the threat of an impending danger. Besides benevolences, forcible loans and donations, emergency

[57] Cf. *Manu*, VII. 130 ; *Gautama*, X. 25 ; etc. ; *Śukra* (IV. 2. 128), makes the tax to be a thirty-second fraction.
[58] Cf. Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India*, 1st Ed., p 204.
[59] *Rāj.*, VII. 1008. [60] *EI*, XX. p. 64 (Vikramāditya V).
[61] Cf. Ghoshal, *Hindu Revenue System*, pp. 232 f, 262 f.
[62] *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*, No. 520 of 1920.

taxes, arbitrary enhancement of normal rates, and fraudulent and forcible collections under several pretexts, which are exhaustively dealt with by Kauṭilya and others,[63] reference may also be made to the sale of divine images by the Mauryas, recorded by Patañjali,[64] and the scheme of debased coinage resorted to by the Mauryas[65] and the Guptas,[66] which must have been instrumental in filling the State treasury to a great extent. It may, however, be observed that Kauṭilya prescribes that some of these taxing devices should be levied on the seditious and irreligious only, and not on all.[67]

Compared with the minute treatment of the several sources of revenue by the cited authorities, expenditure does not seem to have received its due share of attention. However, before coming to the different items of expenditure, let it be seen what the economists have to say regarding the proportion of revenue to expenditure. According to Śukra,[68] one-sixth of the income should go to saving; one-half should be spent on the army; and one-twelfth each on charity, ministers, inferior officials, and the privy purse. The *Mānasollāsa*[69] recommends that ordinarily three-fourths of the revenue should be spent, and one-fourth should be saved.

First and foremost among the sources of expenditure was the maintenance of the security of the realm, which involved not only the maintenance of a well-equipped armed force in the four branches and the navy, capable of both offence and defence, but also of the storehouses, armouries, and, above all, the entire organization of the secret service. The observations of Megasthenes along with Kauṭilya's regulations indicate that this head of national defence absorbed a considerable portion of the revenue. The other items on the expenditure side answered the several obligations of a welfare State, which included the king's privy purse; civil list for the king and court—his ministers and officers; police and other protective establishments for citizens, merchants, and travellers; legal, judicial, and punitive departments; granaries and *gośālās* (cow infirmaries) as insurance against famine; grants to local governments; roads and other equipment with bridges, rest-houses, trees, and watering places; ships and ferries; irrigation works; maintenance of mines, forests, forts, public factories, mints, storehouses, and palaces; religious and charitable endowments like temples, hospitals, schools, and universities; maintenance of widows and orphans; the indigent and the unemployed, and the families of soldiers and civil servants dying in State service.

Kauṭ., V. 2, pp. 242-246; *Manu*, X. 118-120; *Nītiv.*, p. 82; *Śukra*, IV. 2. 9; etc.
On *Pāṇ.*, IV. 3. 99: *Mauryair hiraṇyārthibhir arcyāḥ prakalpitāḥ*.
Cf. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, p. 333. [66] Cf. Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
V. 2, p. 246: *Evaṁ dūṣyeṣu adhārmikeṣu varteta, netareṣu*.
I. 315-7. [69] II.4. 439-40.

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GUILDS AND OTHER CORPORATE BODIES

INTRODUCTORY

WE have a number of cognate terms in our ancient literature, namely, *śreṇī*, *saṅgha*, *gaṇa*, *pūga*, and *vrāta*, signifying various types of human associations which are distinct from the ethnic divisions into *varṇas* (castes), *jātis* (sub-castes), and *kulas* (families). These terms are used in the indefinite sense of a group in the Vedic literature. But they acquired thereafter a technical significance which is given differently by different authorities. We may draw from these explanations the general conclusion that there flourished at least from the epoch of the rise of Buddhism two types of guilds, namely, the industrial and the professional (or commercial), and that these were confined in some cases to their caste fellows, while in others members were recruited from different castes. To the above we have to add the institution of partnership among capitalists and workmen belonging, as our authorities prove, to the same centuries.[1]

THE PRE-MAURYA AND MAURYA PERIODS (*c.* 700-184 B.C.)

It was during this period that there took place a great development of agriculture, industry, and trade in our land. This is proved by the conjoint testimony of the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist records as also of the foreign writers. It is in this context that we have to explain the rise of guilds and similar bodies into prominence in the economic and even in the social and political life of our people. To begin with the constitution of these bodies, they appear to have been well organized under their respective heads. A list of eighteen unspecified *seṇis* (Skt. *śreṇīs*) or craft guilds is mentioned in a number of Jātaka texts, these bodies being said

[1] Different interpretations of the above and other terms; (a) *śreṇī* explained in the *Vaijayantī* (237. 90) as a group of craftsmen of the same *jāti* and similarly in Aparārka's commentary on *Yāj*. (II. 192) as a group of persons belonging to the same *jāti* and living by the same craft. By contrast it is explained by Vijñāneśvara (On *Yāj*., II. 30 and 192) as a group of persons of different *jātis* living by the occupation of a single *jāti*, such as horse dealers, sellers of betel leaves, weavers, leather workers and so forth, and more simply as those who live by manufacturing some kind of merchandise. (b) *naigama*, according to Aparārka (on *Yāj*., II. 192), means men of different *jātis* travelling to another country for trade and in the *Smṛti-Candrikā* (Vol. III. p. 523) as merchants belonging to a caravan and so forth ; (c) *gaṇa* means a group of *kulas* (*Kātyāyana Smṛti*, verse 680), an assembly of armed persons following a single occupation ; or a guild of horse dealers ; (d) *Pūga* means an association of traders and so forth (*Kātyāyana-Smṛti*) ; an association of men of different castes and no fixed occupations, and bent solely on money-making and pleasure (*Kāśikā* on Pāṇini, V. 2. 21) ; an association of people of different castes and occupations living in one locality (Vijñāneśvara on *Yāj*., II. 30) ; or riders of elephants, horses and so forth (*Smṛti-Candrikā*, III. p. 523). Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* mentions a type of *saṅghas* living by the profession of agriculture and trade, as also fighting.

to be under chiefs called *pamukhas* (Skt. *pramukhas*). At the head of the *pūgas* stood the *grāmaṇīs* (as they are called by Pāṇini), or the *gāmaṇikas* (as they are styled in the Pali canon). Their position, according to the Pali canonical texts, was one of high social standing and heavy responsibility. From Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* we learn that the *saṅghas* and the *gaṇas* were headed by *mukhyas*, while the Jātakas speak of crafts being in charge of *jeṭṭhakas* or *pamukhas*. The office of the *seṭṭhi* (Skt. *śresṭhin*, chief merchant, sometimes translated as 'treasurer' or 'banker'), which is mentioned as a hereditary post, doubtless implied some kind of authority over the other merchants. The three characteristics of crafts in the objective accounts of the Jātakas, namely, the pursuit of the father's occupation by his sons in ordinary times, the localization of the industries, and the headship of the *jeṭṭhaka* (or the *pamukha*) have suggested to a German scholar (Richard Ficke) their equivalence to the mediaeval European guilds.[2]

As regards the status and functions of the corporate bodies, we find in the Pali canonical texts references to the jurisdiction of the *pūgas* over their members. The early Smṛtis (or the Dharma-Sūtras) have a complex attitude towards these bodies. On the one hand, the *gaṇas* are placed under a social ban, evidently because of their non-orthodox beliefs and practices. On the other hand, the evidence of the *śreṇīs* (alternatively with that of the village and town elders) is allowed to decide boundary disputes in the event of conflict of documentary evidence. Another important clause of the law recognizes not only the customs of cultivators, traders, herdsmen, money-lenders, and artisans, as authoritative in judicial trials, but also permits their spokesmen to declare the same. A late Dharma-Sūtra text safeguards the property of *gaṇas* and enforces the observance of their conventions by the members by means of legal penalties.[3] The attitude of Kauṭilya indicates a characteristic blending of the ideas of the Dharma-Sūtras and the *Arthaśāstra* proper. Referring doubtless to the Smṛti clause about the legal authority of the usages of these bodies, the author adds[4] that

[2] The economic condition of India during the successive periods is dealt with in the relevant chapters in *Cambridge History of India* (Vol. I), *The Age of the Nandas and the Mauryas*, *A Comprehensive History of India* (Vol. II) and *The History of Culture of the Indian People* (Vols. I—V). Among the few studies of particular periods may be mentioned *The Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period* (c. A.D. 300-550) by Sachindra Kumar Maity (Calcutta, 1957). For references to *pūga-grāmaṇīs* or *pūga-gāmaṇikas*, *vide Pāṇini* (IV 3. 12), and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (III 76-78, 299-300). For the Jātaka references to *seṭṭhis* and *senis*, see especially Richard Ficke, *Die sociale Gliederung im nordöstlichen Indien zu Buddha's Zeit* (Kiel, 1897), English translation *The Social Organization in North-Eastern India in Buddha's Time* by Sisirkumar Maitra, Chapters IX-X.

[3] References: (a) *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I. 128; *Vinaya*. IV. 226 (jurisdiction of *pūgas*); (b) *Vasiṣṭha*, XIV. 10, followed by *Viṣṇu*, II. 7 (social ban on *gaṇas*); (c) *Vasiṣṭha* XVI 15 (evidence of *śreṇīs*); (d) *Gautama*, XI. 21 (authority of customs of cultivators, etc.) *Viṣṇu Smṛti*, V. 167-8 (property and conventions of *gaṇas*).

[4] *Kauṭ*., II. 7 (p. 62).

the righteous usages (*dharmas*), conventions (*vyavahāras*), and customs (*caritras*) of the *saṅghas* as also of the regions (*deśas*), villages (*grāmas*), sub-castes (*jātis*), and families (*kulas*) should be recorded in the comprehensive State register at the accounts office (*akṣapaṭala*). Again, under the head of law relating to partition and inheritance,[5] he makes special reference to the application of the traditional usages of *saṅghas* and *gaṇas*. Elsewhere violation of agreements made with the *gaṇa* by its members is visited with a fine. On the other hand, in keeping with the *Arthaśāstra* spirit of strict official control, the *śreṇīs* concerned are required to be guarantees for deposits received by the craftsmen, and they are declared to be liable to repay the same in the event of the craftsmen's death or other calamity.[6] Kauṭilya, again, in harmony with the spirit of the *Arthaśāstra*, makes no scruples in exploiting the *śreṇīs* and the *saṅghas* for political purposes. A prince driven to live by his own exertions, we are told,[7] may plunder the property of *saṅghas* and others for his livelihood. The king's officers, again, may seize the property of *saṅghas* on a suitable pretext at the time of the king's financial stringency.[8] Not only are the heads of the *śreṇīs* included in the king's pay-roll, but their services are required to be utilized secretly to create disaffection in the enemy's kingdom.[9] How the policy of conciliation and bribery is to be applied by the king towards the loyal *saṅghas*, and that of dissension and chastisement against the disloyal ones, is illustrated by the author elsewhere[10] by numerous examples. This is justified by the argument that *saṅghas* are invincible against enemies, and as such their support is the best of the king's supports from military and friendly quarters.

A word may be said here about the partnerships of capitalists and workmen. The Jātakas indeed occasionally refer to merchants' partnerships. But usually the caravans of the traders are found to be travelling together only for mutual convenience, and in some cases even for avoidance of mutual underselling.[11]

THE PRE-GUPTA AND GUPTA PERIODS (*c*. 184 B.C.—A.D. 700)

The records of this period indicate a considerable advance of industry and trade in their various branches. In the latter half of the first century before Christ and the following half century, a great impetus was given to India's trade with the Western world, since the discovery of the monsoons by the Roman merchants greatly shortened their voyage to our land. The

[5] *Ibid*., III. 7 (p. 165).
[6] *Ibid*., IV. 1 (p. 200).
[7] *Ibid*., I. 18 (p. 36).
[8] *Ibid*., V. 2 (p. 244).
[9] *Ibid*., V. 3 (p. 247). XIII. 3 (p. 400).
[10] *Ibid*., XI. 1 (pp. 378 f).
[11] Cf. the remarks of Mrs. Rhys Davids in *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, Chapter VIII, pp. 211-12.

pace of progress was continued and intensified under the well-organized and efficient government of the Imperial Guptas and their successors. It was therefore natural that the conditions of the guilds and related bodies should show great improvement during these times. In the Smṛtis of the period, to begin with, there is no trace of the strict official control or political exploitation of the *śreṇīs* and the *saṅghas*, such as we have noticed in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. On the contrary, we observe a remarkable tendency to safeguard the property and strengthen the constitution of these bodies, which were usually grouped under the general heading of *samūhas* (collective bodies). Theft of property owned by a *gaṇa*, we read, was to be punished with confiscation and banishment.[12] The orders of 'the advisers for the good of the *samūhas*' were to be obeyed by all the members.[13] Violation of agreement made by a member with his *saṅgha* or *gaṇa* was to be punished with a heavy fine, confiscation, imprisonment, or banishment.[14] The heads of the *śreṇīs* and the *gaṇas* were to visit offending members with verbal censure or excommunication, and the king was to approve of these penalties.[15] A member offering perverse opposition or making a frivolous speech was to be punished with fine, and one committing a violent crime or causing a split in the *samūha* or destroying its property was to be proclaimed guilty by the king and uprooted thereafter.[16] The *samūha*, we are further told, was to manage its affairs according to the established rules, which were to be reduced to writing,[17] and its business was to be conducted under the guidance of elected 'overseers of public business' (*kāryacintakas*) or 'advisers for the good of the *samūhas*', whose number should be two, three, or five.[18] The political status of these bodies shared in this improvement of their organization. Manu and Yājñavalkya place the customs or conventions (*dharmas*) of *śreṇīs* and related bodies on the same level with those of regions, sub-castes, and families, which had been invested with the authority of laws far back in the Dharma-Sūtras.[19] What is more, the *pūga* and the *śreṇī* (or else the *śreṇī* and the *gaṇa*) are recognized as holding rights of jurisdiction over suitors midway between the family and the king's officers. For while Yājñavalkya[20] allows the king's officers, the *pūga*, the *śreṇī*, and the *kula* the authority to investigate disputes in the descending order of their enumeration, Nārada does the same with regard to the *kula*, the *śreṇī*, the *gaṇa*, the

[12] *Yāj.*, II. 197.
[13] *Ibid.*, II. 188 and Bṛhaspati quoted in Aparārka's comm. thereon, pp. 792 f.
[14] *Manu*, VIII. 219-20 ; *Yāj.*, II. 187 ; and Bṛhaspati in Aparārka, pp. 792 f
[15] Bṛhaspati in Aparārka, p. 793.
[16] *Kāt.*, W. 668 f.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Yāj.*, II. 191 ; Bṛhaspati, p. 151 (vv. 8-10).
[19] *Manu*, VIII. 41 ; *Yāj.*, I. 361.
[20] II. 30.

king's officers, and the king in an ascending order. According to Yājñavalkya,[21] the representatives of the *samūha* calling upon the king on its business are to be honoured with gifts, but all such presents are to be made over to the *samūha* on pain of liability to a heavy fine. We have an echo of the Smṛti attitude towards the guilds in a few extracts of the *Mahābhārata*. We learn, for instance, that the good opinion of the executive officers of the *śreṇīs* was held to be a great asset of a king, and their support was canvassed by his enemies.[22] Further, we read that the violation of the *dharma* of one's own *śreṇī* was held to be an inexpiable sin.[23]

The historical references tend to corroborate and supplement in some respects the account given above. We have a number of inscriptions of the first two centuries of the Christian era and belonging to localities in northern and western India which record the endowments given by foreign donors to the *śreṇīs* for pious and charitable purposes. These guilds were both of the industrial and the commercial type. From the above we learn that the craft as well as the merchant guilds were functioning at this period as bankers and public trustees. Two inscriptions of the years A.D. 437-38 and A.D. 473-74 and belonging to the regions of modern Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively prove that the industrial guilds used to receive deposits and found endowments for pious purposes, and that they were organized under a single head. A few seals of guilds of bankers, traders, and artisans which have been discovered at the site of ancient Vaiśālī have been held to suggest something like a modern Chamber of Commerce established at the permanent headquarters, from which members sent out instructions to their local agents. In a series of inscriptions from North Bengal ranging between A.D. 443-44 and 533-34, the guild president (*nagara-śreṣṭhin*) the leading merchant (*sārthavāha*), the leading artisan (*prathama-kulika*). and the leading scribe (*prathama-kāyastha*) are found to be associated with the District Officer or the Provincial Governor in the management of the crown lands.[24]

Coming to the subject of partnerships, we may mention that the Smṛtis of this period have a new head of law called *sambhūya-samutthāna* (business in partnership). Under this heading Manu extends the rule relating to the shares of fees payable to the priests jointly performing a sacrifice to all those who similarly do their work jointly. On the other hand, Yājñavalkya applies the law of partnership in trade to the sacrificial priests, the husbandmen,

[21] II. 189-90.

[22] *Mbh*., III. 249. 16, XII. 59. 49.

[23] *Ibid*., XII. 36. 19.

[24] References: Lüders, *A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions from the earliest times to about A.D. 400 with the exception of Aśoka*. (*EI*, X. App.), Nos. 1133, 1137, 1162, 1165; *EI*, XXI. p. 60 (inscriptions of first and second centuries); (b) *CII*, III. 70-71, *ibid*., 81-84 (inscriptions of A.D. 437-38 and A.D. 473-74); (c) *ARASI*, 1903-04, p. 110 (Basarh seals); (d) *EI*, XV. no. 7 North Bengal inscriptions).

and the artisans. The clauses relating to the division of profits among the partners as well as their rights and duties are marked by equity and good sense. The priest's share, we are told, is to be proportionate to his work, except when it is specifically allotted (Manu); the division of profit and loss among partners in trade should be in proportion to their share in the business or according to agreement (Yājñavalkya); the division of profits among four grades of artisans, namely, the apprentice, the advanced student, the expert, and the master craftsman, is to be in the proportion of 1:2:3:4, and among builders of palaces, the head architect receives double his share of the profit (Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana); a partner doing work that is forbidden or causing harm through negligence is to make good the loss, while he who preserves the property from a calamity is to get one-tenth as his reward; a partner unable to do his work himself may get it done by an agent, but he who follows crooked ways should be deprived of his profit and expelled.[25]

THE POST-GUPTA PERIOD (c. A.D. 700-1200)

Because of the advanced condition of industry and trade, the development of guilds and related bodies appears to have been continued and indeed accelerated during this period. We may illustrate this point by quotations from two leading Smṛti authorities during these times. We refer to the commentary on the *Manu Smṛti* by Medhātithi (ninth century) and the *Smṛti-Candrikā* digest by Devaṇṇa Bhaṭṭa (latter half of the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century). The topic is dealt with by them under the head of law called *saṁvid-vyatikrama* (violation of compact) or *samayānupākarma* (non-transgression of compact). Thus Medhātithi[26] defines *śreṇī* as a group of people following common professions, such as tradesmen, artisans, money-lenders, coachmen, and so forth. More generally, he defines *saṅgha* as a community of persons following the same pursuit, although belonging to different sub-castes (*jātis*) and regions (*deśas*), and he gives the example of *saṅghas* of mendicants, of merchants, and of those versed in the four Vedas.[27] With these may be compared the definitions of these and cognate terms by the authorities quoted at the beginning of this chapter.[28] From the above it follows that there were two types of guilds, namely, the craft guilds and the merchant guilds, of which the latter, unlike the former, comprised different castes inhabiting different regions. The explanations of the old Smṛti texts by the above-mentioned authorities indicate the functions of the guilds and associated bodies in their time. Certain principal

[25] *Manu*, VIII. 206-11; *Yāj.*, II. 259-65; *Bṛhaspati*, pp. 131, 133, 135-6 (vv. 9-11. 13. 22-3. 35-36); *Kāt*; vv. 627, 632.
[26] On *Manu*, VIII. 41. [27] *Ibid.*, VIII. 219. [28] See fn. 1 above.

tradesmen, says Medhātithi,[29] offer to pay tax to the king at a fixed rate, and on the king's accepting the offer, they make rules among themselves such as not to sell a particular commodity at a particular time that will bring them large profits, but injure the interest of the kingdom. The fullest account is that of the *Smṛti-candrikā*. Compacts were made by the *śreṇīs* and *naigamas* as also by villagers and heretical sects, says the author, for dividing the burdens among the householders, owners of fields, and individuals, as the case might be, for the purpose of averting minor calamities like drought or alarm from thieves or official oppression as well as of performing a number of pious acts.[30] Among the *naigamas* and *śreṇīs* there were such compacts as that one disregarding the messenger in uniform sent by a *naigama* was to be fined, and that a particular kind of merchandise was to be sold by a particular *śreṇī*. The compacts made as above by the people assembled together were to be observed not only by the groups concerned but also enforced by the king. From the above it follows that the craft and merchant guilds, among others, used to frame rules for co-operative undertakings for secular and pious purposes as well as for maintaining their authority and controlling the market. These compacts, again, were enforceable in law. Some further light is thrown upon the methods of conducting business in these bodies by the *Smṛti-candrikā* in the same context.[31] The appointment of two, three, or five 'overseers of business', says the author, is justified on the ground that the groups, being of different minds and unlimited numbers, are incapable of deciding between proper and improper acts as well as of a unanimous decision. The groups themselves are to punish, with fine or expulsion from the place of assembly, persons guilty of a number of offences. When the groups are unable to prevent the insolence of their chiefs (*mukhyas*) and similar offences of their members, the king is to set the *mukhya* on the proper path and to banish him in the event of his recalcitrance. The *gaṇas* alone must be understood to have authority to punish offenders who have even a slight competence. When the king is adverse to punishment because he is unrighteous or too righteous, the *saṅgha* and the village and regional units are themselves to do the work.

The above account of the constitution and functions is supplemented and partly corroborated by the historical inscriptions of this period. The guilds and other bodies, we learn from this source, were under single or multiple chiefs (*mahattaras*), who corresponded no doubt to the 'overseers of business' of the Smṛtis. They collectively founded pious endowments and received money on trust from the public with the same object. The merchant guilds sometimes voluntarily imposed tolls upon various articles

[29] On *Manu*, VIII. 41. [30] *Sm. C.*, III pp. 522 f. [31] *Ibid.*, III. pp. 526 f.

of trade for the same purpose. A number of important trading corporations are mentioned as carrying on their activities in South India during the period. Such was the *maṇigrāmam* which was a non-denominational institution open to Christians as well as Hindus, and operated both in the coastal and the inland towns of South India. Such, above all, was the famous *Nānādeśa-Ṭiśaiyāyirattu-Aiññūṟṟuvar* 'the Thousand and Five Hundred from all countries and directions', whose activities dated from the latter half of the ninth century, and were extended to Burma and Sumatra in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Their claim to a mythical ancestry, their long history, the vast scale of their commercial transactions, and their daring as well as enterprising spirit are commemorated in the most famous of their inscriptions.[32]

We may conclude this chapter with a short account of the condition of partnership of capitalists and workmen during this period. This is indicated by the explanations of Smṛti texts under the head of law called 'business in partnership' by the commentaries and digests. Among architects, masons, carpenters, and the like, says Medhātithi,[33] the wages are to be distributed on the principle that he who does the more difficult part of the job gets more, and he who does the easy part gets less. Partnerships, according to the fuller explanation in the *Smṛti-candrikā*,[34] are of six classes, of which the first three are concerned with trade, agriculture, and crafts. Among merchants, profit and loss as well as expenditure and work were divided by the partners according to the capital laid out by each; alternatively profit and loss were to be shared according to the special agreement (*saṁvit*) made by the parties. This general rule applied likewise to the cultivators. Among craftsmen the old Smṛti rules were applicable: that goldsmiths and the like were to share the profit according to the nature of their work; that the teacher, 'the adept', the expert and the preceptor were to divide the profits in the proportion of 1:2: 3:4; and that the master-craftsman (*mukhya*) among the builders of wooden and other residences was to get a double share.

[32] *Epigraphia Carnatica*, VII. SK. 118.
[33] On *Manu*, VIII. 211.
[34] III 429-41.

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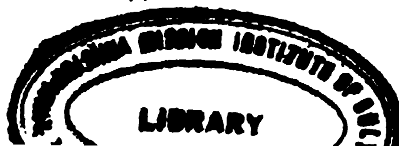
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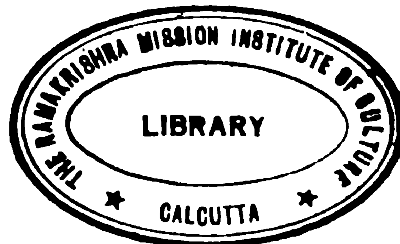
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